AUGUST 4, 1986 • $1.95

BROKEN
DI ROMANCE

## The Editors: How to Stop Lobbying

*WHY THE DEMOCRATS WILL REGAIN THE SENATE • THE MYTH OF LIE DETECTORS*

# THE NEW REPUBLIC

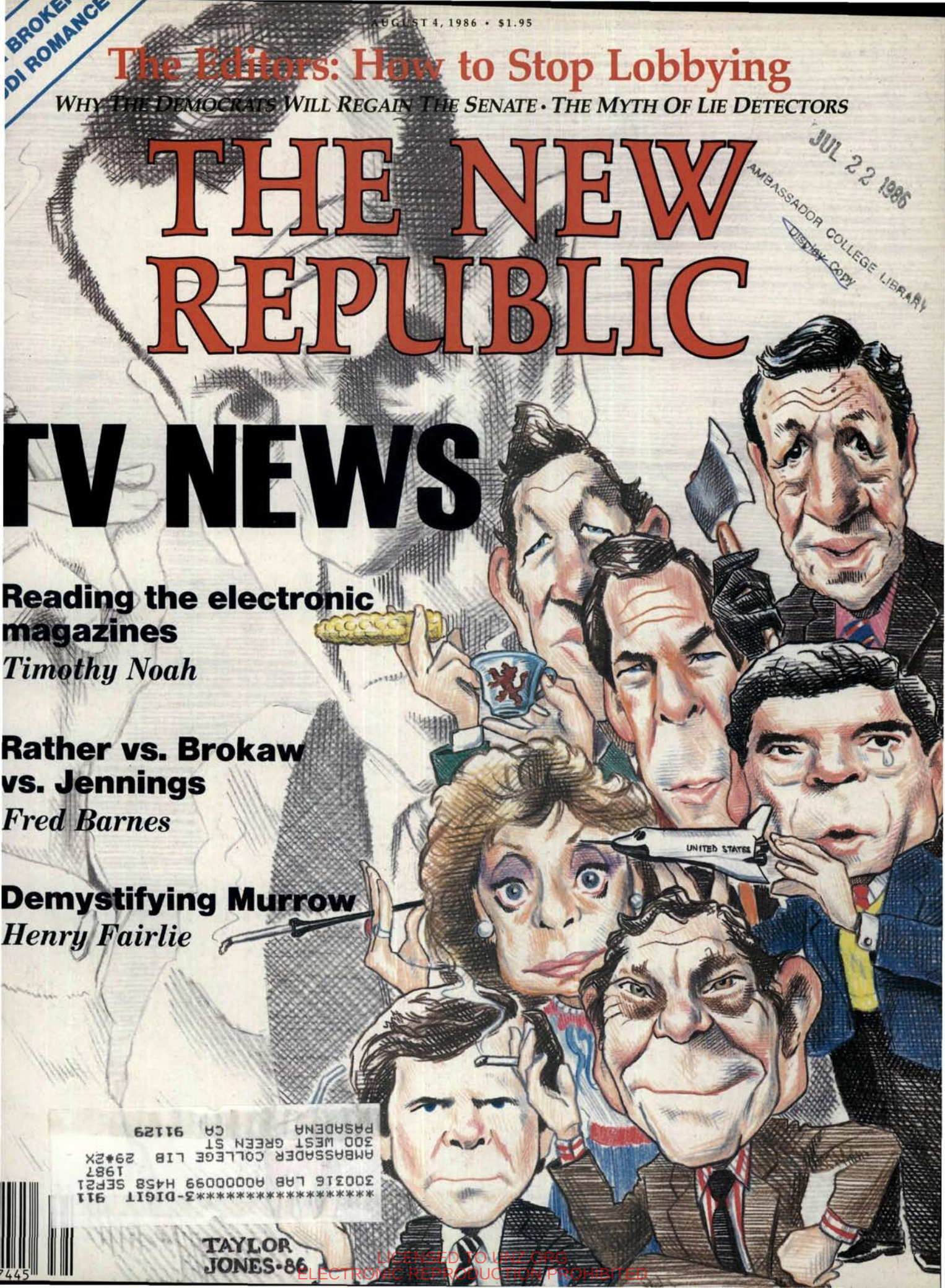
JUL 22 1986
AMBASSADOR COLLEGE LIBRARY
DISPLAY COPY

# TV NEWS

**Reading the electronic magazines**
*Timothy Noah*

**Rather vs. Brokaw vs. Jennings**
*Fred Barnes*

**Demystifying Murrow**
*Henry Fairlie*



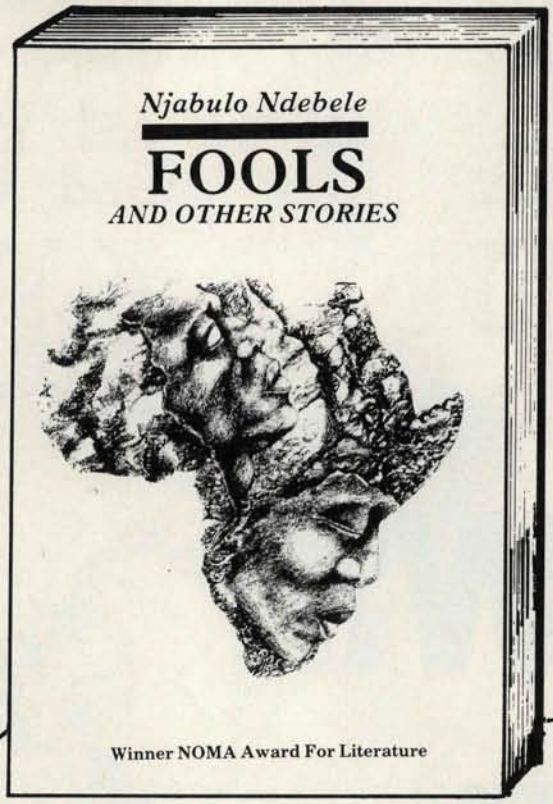

911 3-DIGIT ********************
300316 LAB A0000099 H458 SEP21
1987
AMBASSADOR COLLEGE LIB 29*2X
300 WEST GREEN ST
PASADENA CA 91129

TAYLOR
JONES-86

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# BOOKS FROM THE REAL WORLD

**Readers International brings you today's world literature. Each hardcover volume, by subscription, is just $8.45** *(Regularly to $17.50).*




**CATHEDRAL OF THE AUGUST HEAT**
**Haïti** — **Pierre Clitandre**

**THE STORY OF ZAHRA**
**Lebanon** — **Hanan al-Shaykh**

**FLIGHT OF ASHES**
**East Germany** — **Monika Maron**

Read any *black* South African writers lately? Brink, Coetzee, Gordimer, Paton–each enlightens us on South Africa, but none would claim to speak for their black countrymen. Now comes NJABULO NDEBELE, a world-class writer from the townships. His *Fools and Other Stories* won Africa's highest international literary award. Set in Charterston (now destroyed by 'relocation'), Ndebele's finely crafted stories give us the humanity, dignity and humor of the shacks and *shebeens:* the nurses, musicians, faith-healers, those who struggle to succeed, those who don't–in a world where the distant white oppressor is largely irrelevant. The novella *Fools* explores a complex relationship between two black men of different generations bound together by an act of shame. The disgraced middle-aged teacher Zamani must face his failures, and young Zani must live with his anger as both prepare for the long, painful walk to freedom.

From East Berlin comes *Flight of Ashes,* Monika Maron's elegant and forceful novel of a young idealist on an official newspaper who is shocked to find 'the dirtiest town in Europe'. Honest journalism east of the Wall, she learns, is like driving a car a hundred miles with the handbrake on.

*Cathedral of the August Heat,* Pierre Clitandre's novel of Haïti, brings alive the epic of those wretched of the New World who, once again, have made history. 'Blends earthy realism with voodoo and Creole folklore...a marvelous apotheosis' says *World Literature Today.*

These and other ground-breaking contemporary works can be yours by subscription in exceptional English-language editions through Readers International (RI).

Says *In These Times* (Chicago): 'Like a magazine subscription, it's a gamble-but it could be more than worth it, for its introduction to worlds we might never have known existed.'

'*A splendid and important enterprise and worth supporting,*' says London's Financial Times.

**Your subscription begins with *Fools and Other Stories* by Njabulo Ndebele, the new voice from South Africa's townships.**

It will be followed every other month by a new **RI** selection, specially priced, in hardcover, at **$8.45.** Readers like you have already helped launch the works below to critical acclaim as part of **RI**'s unique non-profit publishing program.

*Awaiting Trespass* by Linda Ty-Casper (Philippines): 'Jabs so deft they avoid the didactic but sting mightily' says NYTimes Book Review. 'This deeply moving book is full of good people, good talk, and a wisdom regarding the inner life' (Kirkus).

*Poland Under Black Light* by Janusz Anderman: 'Extremely poignant and very, very Polish' (BBC World Service); 'an honest & powerful voice...he undercuts the lies of one side and the mythology of the other' (New Statesman).

*To Bury Our Fathers* by Nicaragua's Vice President and master novelist, Sergio Ramírez: 'Read slowly and carefully to appreciate & absorb all its nuances...Dr Ramírez is as important as the substantial literary merits of his book. (New York Times Book Review).

SUBSCRIBE NOW for a *good read* every two months and help bring some of today's most gifted writers into English. Says A. Whitney Ellsworth, Publisher of The New York Review of Books: *'Readers International is exciting: Good books–and a good cause.'* Return the coupon to receive your first volume.

Thousands of RI subscribers now receive a new book every two months: Beautiful hard-cover editions at the special price $8.45 plus $1.50 p&p. (Usual prices to $17.50, so savings are considerable.)

Further books in the current series come from Brazil, Lebanon and Congo (Brazzaville). Many were initially banned at home or written in exile: RI is committed to publishing literature in danger. Each is current, from the past 10 years. Each is new to readers here–though many have been acclaimed in European editions.

**READERS INTERNATIONAL**
P O Box 959 Columbia, LA 71418

Please begin my subscription to RI's series with *Fools and Other Stories* at the $8.45 subscriber price plus $1.50 for postage. Send RI's latest book at the same price every other month. At any time I may cancel simply by writing you.

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY STATE ZIP

☐ $9.95 (Can $12.50) enclosed. Bill my ☐ Mastercard ☐ VISA

CARD NUMBER EXPIRATION DATE

SIGNATURE

**SPECIAL SAVINGS:** Prepay a year's subscription for six books at just $6.50 per book plus $1.50 p&p.
☐ I enclose my check for $48.00 (Can $58).
☐ Bill my credit card for $48 (US currency only).
TNR6

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# THE NEW REPUBLIC

FOUNDED 1914 — *A Weekly Journal of Opinion* — ISSUE 3,733

WASHINGTON, D.C. — AUGUST 4, 1986



*Editor-in-Chief and President*
MARTIN PERETZ

*Editor*
MICHAEL KINSLEY
*Literary Editor*
LEON WIESELTIER
*Senior Editors*
FRED BARNES, ANN HULBERT,
CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER
*Managing Editor*
DOROTHY WICKENDEN
*Associate Editors*
JEFFERSON MORLEY
CHARLES LANE
*New Republic Books Editor*
(Henry Holt and Company)
STEVE WASSERMAN
*Films* — STANLEY KAUFFMANN
*Theater* — ROBERT BRUSTEIN
*Music* — EDWARD ROTHSTEIN
*Poetry* — RICHARD HOWARD
*Art*
MARK STEVENS
*Economics Correspondent*
ROBERT KUTTNER
*Contributing Editors*
ROBERT COLES, HENRY FAIRLIE,
JAMES K. GLASSMAN, HENDRIK HERTZBERG,
JOHN KEEGAN, MORTON KONDRACKE,
VINT LAWRENCE, R.W.B. LEWIS,
MARK CRISPIN MILLER, ROBERT B. REICH,
MAGGIE SCARF, RONALD STEEL,
RICHARD L. STROUT, E. V. THAW,
ANNE TYLER, NICHOLAS VON HOFFMAN,
MICHAEL WALZER, C. VANN WOODWARD
*West Coast Correspondent*
MICKEY KAUS
*Editorial-Corporate Coordinator*
LAURA E. OBOLENSKY
*Assistant to the Editors*
DINA D. HEIZER
*Production Manager*
BRUCE STEINKE
*Copy Editor*
LEONA HIRAOKA ROTH
*Literary Assistant*
JENNIFER KRAUSS
*Production Assistant*
KAREN A. WATKINS
*Reporter-Researchers*
SARAH HELMSTADTER, ANDREW SULLIVAN
JACOB WEISBERG, JONATHAN ZASLOFF

*Publisher*
JEFFREY L. DEARTH
*Assistant Publisher/Advertising*
JOAN M. STAPLETON
*Controller*
JEAN GANDY
*Circulation Director*
TOM HICKS
*Circulation Manager*
PATTY JONES
*Accounting Manager*
MARIA F. SALATTI
*Circulation Assistant*
KRISTIN CONRADI
*Advertising Assistant*
DARLENE BUSCAGLIO
*Accounting Assistant*
CHRISTINA R. OVERHOLSER
*Back Issues and Reception*
TAMMY FLYNN
*Leadership Network Advertising*
ROBERT F. SENNOTT JR.



4 **TRB FROM WASHINGTON** ..... BLURRED VISION
The latest theme song of the Reagan fan club.

6 **CORRESPONDENCE** ..... Back to Michael's future.

7 **THE EDITORS** ..... SLEAZE IS A DISEASE
Here's our cure for the lobbyist plague.
NOTEBOOK
Gore Vidal, Jeane Kirkpatrick, &c.

9 **EUGENE J. MCCARTHY** ..... BIG BENNY
A fan's notes on the king of swing.

10 **STEPHEN R. DUJACK** ..... POLYGRAPH FEVER
The myth of the lie detector tests.

11 **JAMES K. GLASSMAN** ..... THE MONEY CULTURE: GUESS AGAIN
Why economists are always wrong.

13 **PETER DREIER** ..... PRIVATE PROJECT
The Reagan administration's dangerous plan to sell off public housing.

15 **FRED BARNES** ..... THE PRESS: THE NEWS DERBY
Rating the network news shows.

18 **WILLIAM SCHNEIDER** ..... WIN NOW, PAY LATER
Why the Democrats will regain control of the Senate and how it could hurt them.

21 **BARTON GELLMAN** ..... ROMANCING THE SAUD
The waxing and waning of America's love affair with the Saudi kingdom.

24 **STANLEY KAUFFMANN** ..... ON FILMS: I CAN GIVE YOU ANYTHING BUT LOVE
Souped-up David Mamet in *"About Last Night . . ."*

26 **ROBERT BRUSTEIN** ..... ON THEATER: LIBERTY AND LIBERTIES
Thoughts on the flap over staging *Animal Farm*.

29 **TIMOTHY NOAH** ..... THE VIEW FROM THE TUBE
What's missing from all the TV newsmagazines? A browse through the electronic coffee table.

33 **HENRY FAIRLIE** ..... KING OF THE RADIO
*Murrow: His Life and Times* by A. M. Sperber

37 **LOUIS MENAND** ..... LITERATURE AND LIBERATION
*Going to the Territory* by Ralph Ellison

38 **CAROLINE KNOX** ..... POEM *The Stone Calendar*

40 **HANIF KUREISHI** ..... A FEAST OF WORDS
*The Circle of Reason* by Amitav Ghosh

41 **AKIRA IRIYE** ..... SAVAGE STEREOTYPES
*War Without Mercy: Race & Power in the Pacific War* by John W. Dower

43 **WASHINGTON DIARIST** ..... DON'T DRINK THE WATER


**COVER** by Taylor Jones for THE NEW REPUBLIC. Articles on pages 15, 29, and 33.


THE NEW REPUBLIC, Vol. 195, Number 5, Issue 3,733, August 4, 1986. (Printed on July 16, 1986.) Published weekly (except for combined issues dated Jan. 6 & 13, July 14 & 21, Aug. 11 & 18, and Sept. 15 & 22, 1986) at 1220 19th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036. Telephone (202) 331-7494. Leadership Network advertising (212) 684-5500. Yearly subscriptions, $56; foreign, $81; Canada, $70. Back issues, $2.50 (includes postage & handling).


©1986 by The New Republic, Inc.


(ISSN 0028-6583). Second-class postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices. Indexed in Readers' Guide, Media Review Digest. Available on microfilm from University Microfilms Intnl., 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106 and Bell & Howell, Old Mansfield Road, Wooster, OH 44691. Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. Unsolicited manuscripts can be returned only if accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. **Subscribers:** Please send all remittances, changes of address, and subscription inquiries to **Subscription Service Dept., The New Republic, P.O. Box 56515, Boulder, CO 80322.** For subscription problems call **800-525-0643.**





LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# TRB®

FROM WASHINGTON

## BLURRED VISION

With two and a half years to go, the art of Reagan hagiography has reached its baroque stage. For Independence Day, *Time* magazine's cover featured the president against a background of fireworks: a national icon to rival Miss Liberty herself. I waded through the gush ("His life is a sort of fairy tale of American power") looking for an "On the other hand." At last: "On the other hand, a President can fool only some of the cameras some of the time." But, no: "Reagan . . . could not feign the qualities of his character that came across when he honored the Challenger crew . . . ," etc., etc.

The insistent theme running through the current flood of praise is that Reagan's triumph is one of vision, and cannot be explained (or dismissed) as a matter of personal magic or luck. According to *Time*, "Reagan's success results in part from his impressive basic consistency. He organized a clear set of goals . . . : lower taxes, lower domestic spending, a bigger defense machine and a tougher foreign policy." In a swoony full-page editorial on July 14 heralding "the onset of an era," the *Wall Street Journal* declared that "what has been going on the past six years" is not "a peculiar accident of one man's unique political personality." Rather, "Mr. Reagan has been successful precisely because he is a president operating from an agenda."

The case being made is that Reagan has gone beyond mere political success and legislative victories. In various areas, the claim goes, he (1) began with a clear vision; (2) turned it into action over the opposition of skeptics; (3) saw the action succeed; and (4) permanently changed the political landscape. *Time*: "Just as Franklin Roosevelt's ideas set the style that would dominate the next four decades of American politics," so may Reagan's. The *Wall Street Journal*: "Like FDR, Ronald Reagan is remolding the country's primary institutions and the principles of its economic life."

Oh, yeah? Let's take a f'rinstance. How about tax reform? According to a distinguished (and liberal) political columnist, it's "a political triumph for President Reagan, a landmark in the piecemeal destruction of the New Deal philosophy." The *Journal* says the bill now in conference is the culmination of Reagan's visionary campaign to curtail "the economic destructiveness of a steeply progressive tax system."

This is truly revisionist history. Far from being the culmination of Reagan's efforts, the current tax reform is in important ways a direct repudiation of his 1981 tax bill. That bill expanded loopholes and tax shelters, and shifted the tax burden from corporations to individuals. This bill will do the opposite. In fact, it was the revelation that many corporations and rich individuals were paying no taxes at all, thanks to the 1981 boondoggle, that created the political momentum for genuine reform.

Reagan's idea was never tax reform as such. In his mind lower tax rates would either (depending on the phases of the moon) pay for themselves through the Laffer-Curve free lunch, or be paid for through spending cuts he never made. Reagan's first public reference to tax reform was an attempt to get it *off* the agenda. In his 1984 State of the Union address, fearing that Democrats would make an issue of well-publicized abuses, he announced a Treasury study to be concluded after the election. The assembled pols burst out laughing at that transparent dodge.

Tax reform only became Reagan's "top domestic priority" when it began to look like a winner, and to this day he has invested almost none of his copious political capital in it. The 27 percent top rate that turned out to be the universal solvent was Senator Bob Packwood's idea—Reagan wanted 35 percent, with more loopholes. As for the *Journal*'s lofty notion that tax reform reflects a philosophical victory over the discredited concept of "progressivity," this reform (unlike the 1981 bill) will make the tax code *more* progressive than the current system. That, in fact, is why it's going to pass.

As with any president at any time, the state of the economy is most responsible for Reagan's standing with the public. Yet on the economy, all four elements of the new Reagan myth are open to challenge, to say the least. Reagan's vision of an economic cure in 1980 was balancing the budget and cutting government spending. Whatever may have happened in the next five and a half years, that is not it. This year's deficit looks to be a new record of $220 billion—four times the largest Democratic deficit. Federal spending is 24 percent of GNP, also a record. Even social welfare spending is down only nine percent from what it would have been under pre-Reagan policies. Far from reversing the heritage of FDR and "testing the lower limits" of "what government could do for the individual," as *Time* would fancifully have it, Reagan hasn't even attempted to ask citizens to demand less from their government, except for citizens who are poor.

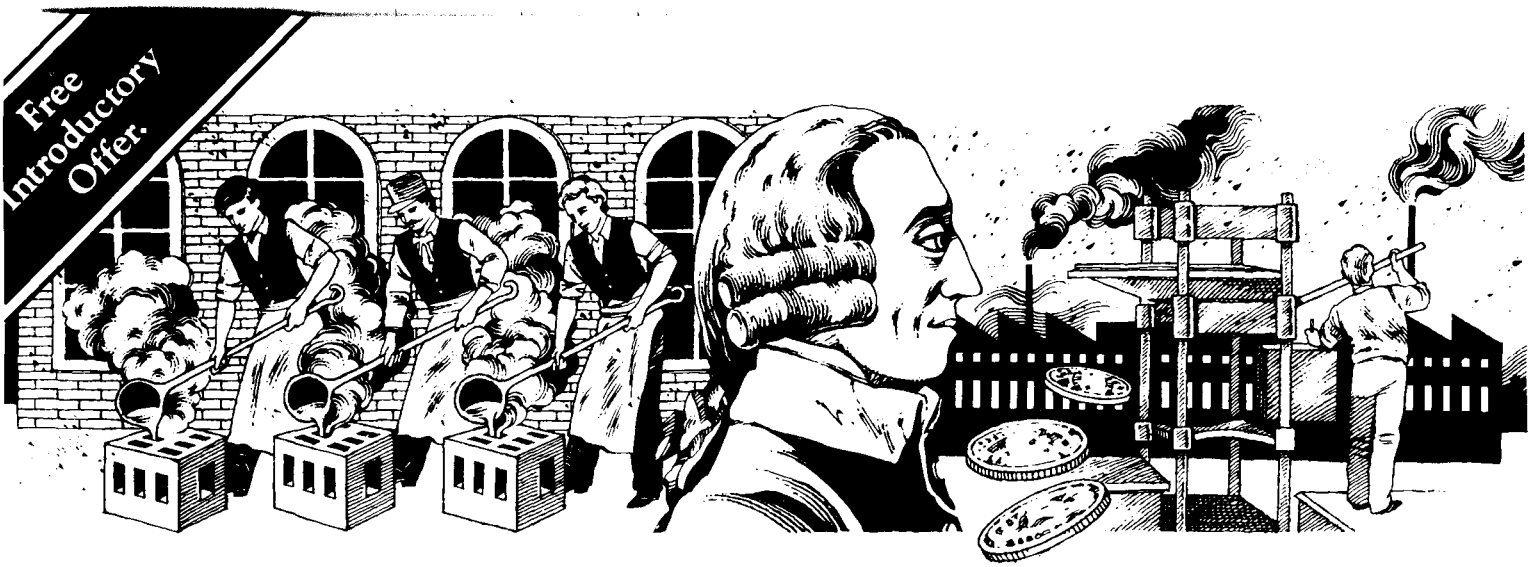
As for practical success, the GNP increased 12.6 percent in real terms from 1981 through 1985. During the previous five years, under the hapless Ford and the feckless Carter, it increased 23.2 percent—almost double. Seen without rose-colored glasses, the future looks grayish, too. At a moment when everything seems to be going our way—lower energy prices, lower dollar, lower interest rates—we putter along at a wan two percent annual growth rate and a record $150 billion annual trade deficit. At best, we'll be paying the bills for our Reagan-era consumption orgy for years to come. At worst, Reagan's incumbency may be seen as the beginning of a British-style long imperial decline.

Sure, this is a tendentious analysis. But just as surely, it is less tendentious than the analysis that sees Reagan's economy as a grand vision grandly fulfilled. Equally skeptical and equally plausible analyses are available of Reagan's foreign and military record. He's had many successes, some failures, much charm, much luck, some skill, a few exercises of idealism, a few exercises of opportunism. Weigh them as you wish, but for heaven's sake get a grip on yourself: the past five years have not been anything as boring and uncomplicated as a triumphal procession from ideal through accomplishment and into the kingdom of heaven.

Saying so sounds petulant, of course. That's OK. Sounding petulant is the fate of party poopers. In the bad old days, conservative Republicans sounded petulant. Someday, they'll have a chance to sound petulant again.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED




# Listen to Adam Smith.

## His Ideas are in the News.

In 1776, Adam Smith published **The Wealth of Nations.** He had some surprising ideas about free trade, protectionism, and the role of government in the economy—all controversies in today's news. For over 200 years, Smith has influenced our ideas about how our economic world works.

**The provocative and persuasive ideas of Smith and others have been gathered into a collection of professionally produced audio tapes. Significant excerpts from each work are included, but these tapes are far more than a mere reading. The Audio Classics discuss the authors, their ideas, and the historical conflicts that inspired their work. A dramatic format brings the classics to life, making them entertaining as well as informative.**

## A New Way to Broaden Your Mind.

All you have to do is listen in the time you might have wasted. If you spend 20 minutes a day in your car, you have time to listen to the ideas of Jefferson, Marx, Thoreau and others. Put a cassette into your player and learn, any where and any time. The Knowledge Products Audio Classics Series can become a mobile seminar.

## Order your free cassette today.

Send for your first set of tapes—Common Sense by Thomas Paine and The Declaration of Independence by Thomas Jefferson—and if not satisfied, return within 30 days for a full refund. With your order, you will receive a new set of two tapes approximately every 30 days, 24 cassettes in all.

If you'd like a free tape on **Ideas That Have Shaped Our World,** plus a brochure for more information, check this option on the coupon and return it to us.

## Guaranteed To Increase The Knowledge You Use Daily.

This 'age of information' in which we live is not necessarily the age of wisdom. The Audio Classics Series is designed for those who recognize that great thinking will enrich their lives and make them more successful—today.

**There is absolutely no risk to you. This is the Knowledge Products guarantee: return the first package of tapes within 30 days, and you owe nothing. If you should become dissatisfied at any point in the series, cancel and receive a pro rata refund for the tapes you haven't received.**

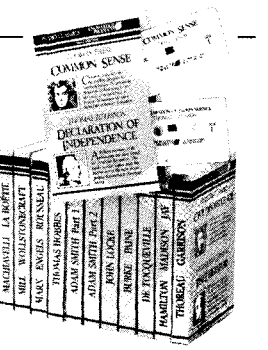
*The Complete Audio Classics Series*

1. • COMMON SENSE
   • DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE
2. • CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE
   • THE LIBERATOR
3. • WEALTH OF NATIONS (Part 1)*
4. • WEALTH OF NATIONS (Part 2)*
5. • THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO
   • THE SOCIAL CONTRACT
6. • THE PRINCE
   • DISCOURSE ON VOLUNTARY SERVITUDE
7. • ON LIBERTY
   • VINDICATION OF THE RIGHTS OF WOMAN
8. • REFLECTIONS ON THE REVOLUTION IN FRANCE
   • RIGHTS OF MAN
9. • LEVIATHAN*
10. • THE FEDERALIST PAPERS*
11. • TWO TREATISES OF GOVERNMENT*
12. • DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA*

**One title in a two-tape set*

For telephone orders, call toll free
1-800-453-9000 Ext.530

**THE KNOWLEDGE YOU NEED IS NOW ON TAPE.**




**Order the Audio Classics Series at No Risk. Cancel with full refund within 30 days if not satisfied.**

☐ Send me the first two tapes, Common Sense and the Declaration of Independence. I understand that the balance of 22 tapes will arrive in sets of two approximately every 30 days.

☐ **Bill My Credit Card:**
__$16.95 per month for twelve months
__$47.50 per month for four months (save over 5%)
__$170 advance payment (a 15% savings)

☐ **Bill My Company $170.**

☐ I Am Enclosing a Personal Check For $170

__Mastercard __Visa
__American Express

Acct. # _____

Expires on: _____

Signature: _____

☐ Send your free tape, **Ideas That Have Shaped Our World,** and a brochure.

Name _____
please print clearly

Address _____

_____

State, Zip _____

Phone Number _____

KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTS

120 Tremont Street, Boston, MA 02108

© Knowledge Products 1985 NR 530

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# CORRESPONDENCE

## BACK TO MICHAEL'S FUTURE

*Editors' note: In the June 30 issue,* TNR *staff members offered three pages of advice to Michael C. Sloan of Bloomington, Indiana, a 22-year-old college graduate with a degree in English literature who wrote to us asking, "What should I do with my life?" Our responses elicited the following:*

*To the editors:*
I got my B.A. in 1973 from a small, private, Midwestern liberal arts college. We graduated into one of the worst job markets for liberal arts degrees since the Depression. Believe me, we were nervous. So what are my classmates doing 13 years later?

One man, after several years in the State Department, has just been appointed a professor at the Kennedy School of Government. Another classmate studied traditional theater in Bali after graduation and recently designed the costumes and sets for a production by a leading repertory theater company. Another went to Barnum and Bailey Clown College after graduation, had his second off-Broadway performance filmed for public television, and went on to be the first performing artist ever to win a MacArthur Fellowship.

I could go on, but you see the point. Now the students at the "major, private university" where I've worked (not taught) for the last 11 years think there's nothing out there but investment banking and the law. So, Michael, where's your *imagination*, man? Commencement is the beginning, not the end.

PETER L. WALSH
*Cambridge, Massachusetts*

*To the editors:*
Many of Raymond Carney's criticisms of Vincent Canby's "kitsch film criticism" can be reapplied to the advice many of your editors give to a model private college graduate who is wondering what to do with his life after gaining a liberal arts education. Advising such a person in a public forum should be considered a serious endeavor by nationally prominent liberal opinion makers and analysts of our society. But most of you guys flaked out.

TNR responded to a graduate's serious inquiry on what to do in life with levity and without a sense of social responsibility. The vast majority of you expressed absolutely no sense of what is good for society in giving direction to this model graduate. The standard of a me-first attitude prevailed. None recommended a virtuous career helping others who are less fortunate. Considering your position as leading liberals, this is bewildering. I am led to suspect that really there is a lack of concern at TNR for the poor (though you give the topic lip service) as well as a pervasive cynicism about public service.

I have recently read your economic correspondent Robert Kuttner's excellent book *The Economic Illusion*, and I would like to hear what he recommends bright, ambitious, and socially concerned young men and women do for a living and for society. I suspect that his advice would not sound like something out of a Doris Day movie.

NELSON ANTHOINE
*Ashland, Oregon*

*To the editors:*
Why did Michael C. Sloan receive so much advice from TNR? Was it because he's young? Because he's from Bloomington, Indiana? Because he's confused?

Listen, I'm confused big time. But mainly I'm mad. For $48 I've gotten nothing from TNR but irregular delivery and nasty notes saying people like me drive up the magazine's rates by not paying on time. No letters of mine have ever been printed. But Michael C. Sloan? He pays the student rate, drops Fred Barnes's name in a note, and gets three pages of advice. A symposium!

Some of us thought the climb to fame was arduous. But Michael C. Sloan has become a household name for all TNR subscribers. Personally, I hope he never gets farther in life than gardening.

DAVID L. SEVERTSON
*Minneapolis, Minnesota*

*To the editors:*
Your advice to Michael was varied and interesting, but all of your editors left out a major and viable option which Michael should consider as a career choice. I would highly recommend that Michael look into marrying a woman in any one of the careers mentioned (including investment banking and law). I would hope they would have many children and Michael would seriously consider staying home and raising them. The work is challenging and would require all of Michael's knowledge gained in and out of school to be applied in a sensitive and delicate fashion. The rewards of the work take a long time to see, but the value of the work cannot be denied. Raising a happy and sane person in this society is a difficult and remarkable accomplishment, and achieved all too rarely.

The availability of these positions is probably quite good and increasing. In my own profession I have known many attractive, intelligent, and successful single women who seem to have some difficulty in finding a husband who would be comfortable with their talents, success, and demands on their time. There are a lot of women out there looking for someone just like him to stay home, take care of the house, and raise the children. After 15 years of the demands and strains of pursuing a successful professional career, I find that option one which I regretfully overlooked and wish I had given it more serious attention.

LEONARD A. PALLOR, M.D.
*Monroe, New York*

*To the editors:*
Your "symposium" response was absolutely the best graduation-season advice I've read. Michael should re-read those three pages again in five years . . . in ten years . . . in 20 years. I've traveled to foreign countries and across my USA, picked oranges and sold title insurance, survived hallucinogens and militant feminism, lived on a dirt-road backstreet and in awninged condos, and blew $5,000 restoring a '59 Mercedes sedan. I can remember each dear supporter, and also the faceless "friends" who tsk-tsked my capriciousness. Now I can speak another language, appreciate Merlors and Semillons, and need no more transportation than my bike and my feet. I still have so many ideas, plans, and schemes, only now they are tempered with experience, education, and goals.

PATRICIA THOMPSON
*Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*

*To the editors:*
With so many different suggestions for what Michael should do with his

*continued on page 42*



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE NEW REPUBLIC
AUGUST 4, 1986

# SLEAZE IS A DISEASE

Washington is swimming in sleaze. New Deal and Fair Deal Democrats pioneered the lucrative but dubious practice of leaving government and selling the connections and inside knowledge they acquired while in the employ of the taxpayers. From Eisenhower to Carter, former administration officials joined the industry. But in the Reagan years, the "revolving door" that leads from official service to the crass realm of influence peddling whirls like a cyclone. Today the game is to get into and out of the government as fast as possible, and market your links to power with brazen abandon. And in this innovative Republican era, opportunities to cash in have expanded even beyond the revolving-door racket. Now people like Roger Stone and Robert K. Gray who were never high officials under Reagan—just friends or campaign hirelings—hype their connections and sell them for exorbitant fees to any cause, foreign or domestic.

The Michael Deaver scandal illustrated the attitude of self-serving worldliness that surrounds the influence-peddling boom. For many Washington insiders, Deaver's sin wasn't that he marketed his relationship with the president without regard for his own principles (if any), the public interest, or even, perhaps, the law. It was that he had done business indiscreetly. As one "old friend" of Deaver's told *Newsweek*: "He's been in too much of a hurry."

The current level of moral acuity in Washington was illustrated by a July 14 *Washington Post* article headlined, "Stuart E. Eizenstat: Lobbyist with a Passion for Public-Policy World." Eizenstat, a former aide to President Carter, is a decent man. That's the point. The *Post* is a crusading newspaper. That's the point too. Neither one sees any anomaly in a puff piece celebrating Eizenstat's post-1980 decision to stay in D.C. and lobby for Big Business as evidence of his "passion for public policy." Basically Eizenstat is marketing his access—just as Mike Deaver was. As a friend of Eizenstat's explained, Eizenstat clients get their way on the Hill because he "returned [congressmen's] phone calls when he was in power, which is something they don't forget." The *Post* article hails Eizenstat as a potential successor to "eminences" such as lawyers Lloyd Cutler and Clark Clifford, as if there were something exalted about Clifford's role as the top influence-peddler of his day.

Who can blame Deaver for blundering across the fine line that separates "legitimate" lobbying from the other kind? After all, no one seems very clear about where that fine line may be. But don't be confused: whoever does it, influence peddling is wrong. It's wrong because officials do their jobs less impartially when they have one eye on the revolving door. It's wrong because it encourages people to sell out their principles. People come to Washington to crusade against communism or corporate welfare and end up pitchmen for Marxist Angola or Big Business. This creates a climate in which even having principles can be regarded as an obstacle to personal success. Influence peddling is wrong because it's unfair to those who have a stake in public policy but can't afford the lobbyists—in other words, most Americans. Finally, influence peddling is wrong because it is a form of graft, the method a few people use to get rich through their connections to the powerful.

Much of the current concern about influence peddling has focused on lobbyists' work for foreign interests. Yes, this does pose some special danger that trade and national security secrets will leak out. But is it so much worse to sell your connections to a foreign interest than to a domestic interest? Either way, you distort the policy process. In most recent disputes, as it happens, the foreign interests have stood on the right side of the issues. Canada employed Deaver to get the United States to do something about acid rain, and a host of other foreign governments have hired lobbyists to fight misguided protectionist legislation.

Can anything be done to de-sleaze this city? It's been tried before. In 1978 Congress banned high-ranking officials from any contact with their former agencies for one year and barred officials for two years from trying to influence the government on matters that had been their "official responsibility." The influence industry fought back, though, and just a few months after the bill became law, Congress crippled it with amendments. The two-year ban was limited to matters in which an ex-official had participated "personally and substantially," and influence-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

peddlers were permitted to advise clients on matters pending before their former agencies as long as the former official didn't personally appear before the agency. In short, Congress has made these rules pretty hard to break, though Michael Deaver may have found a way.

The Deaver case has inspired new efforts to tighten up the influence-peddling laws. A bill by Senator Strom Thurmond of South Carolina was passed 17 to 1 by the Judiciary Committee on June 26, and the House began hearings this week. The Thurmond bill would ban Cabinet members, their top deputies, the top 25 White House aides, federal judges, and members of Congress from lobbying or working for foreign governments, corporations, or political parties for three years after leaving office. All federal employees ranked GS-16 ($61,000 per year) or above would be forbidden from lobbying for foreigners for two years. Top officials and members of Congress couldn't lobby on behalf of domestic clients for 18 months after leaving office, and lower ranking officials would face a one-year ban.

Thurmond had originally proposed an even tougher bill, with a lifetime ban on high officials lobbying for foreigners and bans of one or two years on all lobbying by all former government employees, regardless of rank. But opponents watered the measure down. Some argued that even modest revolving door controls would keep bright young people from going into government. "I would not take a government position, and I would advise a young lawyer not to start his career by taking a government position," wailed Lloyd Cutler. But who needs a government full of people who only see it as a way station to big bucks? If $61,000 a year isn't enough inducement for young lawyers to become assistant secretaries, let 'em go to New York.

THERE ARE MORE substantial objections to a legislative solution to the sleaze problem. One problem is simply defining what constitutes lobbying. Is it lobbying when you advise people behind the scenes on how to deal with your old agency, or only when you appear in person to argue their case before that agency? Does any advice, assistance, or tennis-court conversation that may take place between a former official and foreign or domestic clients—or between the former official and the person who replaced him or her—count as lobbying? There is also a constitutional question: should the law abridge former officials' rights to free speech and to petition the government?

A distinction needs to be made between two broad categories of influence-peddlers in Washington. The first consists of officials who pass through the revolving door and cash in on the public trusts they once held. These people should be the targets of tougher lobbying laws because they do the most direct harm to public confidence in government integrity. As Thurmond showed in drafting his bill, it is relatively easy to define categories of officials whose positions carry such power and prestige that they ought to be kept completely free of the taint of sleaze. Since we don't see any reason to treat peddling influence to foreigners any more harshly than peddling it to Americans, we advocate a blanket, lifetime ban for all the officials named in his bill on attempting to influence government policy on behalf of any paying client after they leave office.

This avoids sticky constitutional questions about free speech. You could speak and petition as freely as you want. You just couldn't do it for money. That may sound draconian, but in fact such a ban wouldn't stop most former officials from cashing in. Many influence-peddlers don't do much direct lobbying. Of course the ban would create plenty of difficult questions and anomalies. For example, some public interest lobbying would be out of bounds, as in the case of a former senator who might become head of the American Civil Liberties Union.

But as the Michael Deaver prosecution demonstrates, there are tricky questions and close cases no matter where you draw the line. So why not draw it in a way that will reinforce the right standards? Our rule is intended to hamper the most egregious forms of sleaze. It would be a clear statement from the body politic that influence peddling is wrong. Again, we don't doubt that even under our ban former officials would cook up all kinds of ways to lobby indirectly. Those who go through that trouble will be identifying themselves as determined sleazeballs and will, we hope, be judged accordingly. Decent people, meanwhile, will be discouraged from getting into the business in the first place.

OUR BAN WOULDN'T touch the second major group of access-dealers: hustlers like Roger Stone who market the connections they acquired through quasi-private activity like running political campaigns. The effect of these characters on Washington's moral climate is every bit as corrosive as that of conventional revolving-door practitioners. Although there is probably no way under the Constitution to prosecute these self-promoters, life could be made tougher for them. There should be stricter enforcement of existing laws that require lobbying firms to disclose their finances, the nature of their work on behalf of foreign interests, and their connections to political action committees. And new disclosure rules ought to be enacted as well. Firms should have to disclose their activities in detail, perhaps on a monthly basis, especially how they set fees and what results their clients get. Consumer information of this type would alert potential pigeons to hype and phoniness. That alone would drive a lot of minor-league sleazeballs out of business.

Beyond new legislation, we need a renewed sense of what's proper and what's not—and the enforcement mechanism of shame to make the distinction stick. Tougher laws will help reinstill a sense of shame, even regarding activities that remain legal. But it takes moral leadership too. President Reagan has actually congratulated those of his aides who left for the influence racket. This president said he would clean up Washington and reduce the federal government's importance in national life. Instead, Washington is now a boomtown for hangers-on, and the public has even less faith in the way the government conducts its business.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# NOTEBOOK

□MORE ON GORE: Novelist Gore Vidal's ugly diatribe against American Jews (*Nation*, March 22), disguised as an ugly diatribe against the neoconservative intellectuals Norman Podhoretz and Midge Decter, was treated by the country's prestige press mostly as a tiff among literary lions. No serious stuff here. As readers will remember, we thought otherwise (see "Patriotic Gore," April 28). Now Irving Howe, who cannot be accused of harboring warm thoughts for Podhoretz and Decter, discusses in the summer issue of *Dissent* both the initial article and the *Nation*'s defense of it. As for what Vidal wrote, Howe says it was "as close to anti-Semitism as anyone not an openly declared anti-Semite could reach." This doesn't leave much room. Well, then, how about the *Nation*'s claim in an "Editor's Note" that it and Vidal had done a service "by violating the taboo that forbids the discussion of the relationship of the American Jewish community to the state of Israel"? It is revealing that the *Nation* can't find any way to discuss the topic without incurring another avalanche of protests even from its readers (who, one would think, would be inured to Jew-baiting by having been exposed to it through some of the *Nation*'s regular writers). But as Howe pointedly asked, "What taboo? Many of us have publicly been engaged in precisely this discussion for years now, and one need only look through the files of various magazines—left, right, and center—to see how fierce this debate has been." Howe goes on: "the Editor's Note in the *Nation* puzzled me. I know its chief editor, Victor Navasky, as a decent and humane man. How could he have committed this defense of the unspeakable Vidal? And then I came up with the answer: the 'Note' had not been written by Navasky at all; it had been subcontracted to a free-lancer named Uriah Heep."

□ CHUTZPAH: In a recent column, Jeane Kirkpatrick took issue with critics of Reagan's human rights policy. "The effort to give Carter policies credit for Reagan's successes is as bold as a bank robbery in broad daylight." Tucked in the middle of Kirkpatrick's list of countries that have experienced "victories of democracy" during the Reagan administration was Argentina. "It is hard to deny the Reagan administration at least some credit for assisting in these developments," Kirkpatrick asserted. Hard to deny? In 1981 President Reagan welcomed to the White House Lieutenant General Roberto Viola, the leader of Argentina's military dictatorship. Over the course of the next 15 months Kirkpatrick and Reagan had numerous friendly meetings with Viola and his Argentine colleagues. After Argentina's war with Britain over the Falkland Islands, the military was swept from power. Last December Viola and four other officers were convicted of war crimes in a Buenos Aires courtroom. The court found that these men had directed a terrorist war on their own people that killed at least 9,000 people, many of them democrats. The administration did oppose Argentina in the war (with Kirkpatrick defending), and Britain's victory did discredit the military. But until Argentina's political gangsters attacked our oldest ally, the administration was glad to praise them. If Kirkpatrick is suggesting that the administration's pre-Falklands policy was somehow helpful in assisting Argentina's return to democracy, she is being as bold as, say, a bank robber in broad daylight.

□ SUPREME COURT ROUNDUP:

**JUSTICES UPHOLD ABORTION RIGHTS BY NARROW VOTE**

**Burger Shift Raises Possibility of Reversal of Position if Membership Changes**

—*New York Times*, June 12

**Reversal of Abortion Ruling Seen as Unlikely**

—*Los Angeles Times*, June 12

***Justices Uphold Partisan Lines In Redistricting***

—*New York Times*, July 1

**Court Disallows Gerrymandering**

—*Los Angeles Times*, July 1

(Thanks to Stanley K. Sheinbaum, Los Angeles)

□ CORRECTION: Last week's editorial erroneously referred to Tom Harkin as a U.S. representative. He is, of course, a Democratic senator from Iowa.

Tribute to a clarinet player.

# BIG BENNY

WHAT HAS BEEN missing in all the tributes to Benny Goodman has been the voice of the run-of-the-mill clarinet players, to whom Benny was more than the "King." He was inspiration, example, consolation—everything short of salvation.

Benny was not pretty like Artie Shaw. He was not flashy like Pete Fountain, or stolid like the classical clarinetist Richard Stoltzman. He looked like an ordinary clarinet player. Benny wore glasses. He looked humble.

Clarinet players are to be heard, and not watched. They usually play best in private, or in the dark. Most of them look better in repose, or in real life, than they do when blowing their horns. The horn, the music, is the thing.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The same cannot be said of most other musicians. Trumpeters, for example, look noble and heroic when they blow. Trombone players are threatening. Baritone and bass horn blowers have bulk. They wrestle with their instruments and throw them about. Clarinet players look vulnerable, holding onto their horns with two hands, as though fearful that the horn might blow out of their mouths. They are epitomized by Woody Allen who, it is said, plays his clarinet every weekend at a club in Greenwich Village.

The clarinet does not have the special qualities that accompany other instruments. The French horn carries with it an air of dedication, as do the oboe and bassoon. The flute and the piccolo suggest patriotism. Among the instruments of higher music, there is the poise of the violins, the aristocratic quality of the violas, the air of deep power with the bass fiddle, and a kind of nobility from the cello—although that nobility is more in the appearance and sound of the instrument than in the performer. The position of the cellist in concert is essentially the same as that one must take in milking a cow.

The clarinet player too must accept the indignity of his position. Even in marching bands, one of the lower forms of musical performance, the clarinetist is given a lowly station, usually bringing up the rear and, if a boy, marching with the girls who seem to make up an inordinate number of clarinetists in high school bands. A marching clarinetist cannot step out like a trumpeter or trombone player, or swing the instrument from side to side with dash and flash as a tuba player or a saxophonist can. Clarinetists on the march usually look as though they were trying to find their place in the music, to keep in step, or to get home.

For all of those clarinet players who suffered humiliation of status, of appearance, who could not well make the transition from B to C, or from C to B in the middle register, who were forced to drop an octave when high G was reached, Benny was there, understanding, encouraging. He was putting out a book on how to play the clarinet, revealing his secrets, while doing it all the easy way, humbly playing with Philharmonic orchestras, with chamber music groups, with big bands, with small bands, in concert halls, in night clubs, in bars, with other musicians or alone, in basements or on rooftops, running the range from the subterranean lowest E to the preternatural, if not supernatural, ultimate E. When Benny Goodman died, he was playing Brahms's Sonata op. 120, a piece for the viola.

I am sure that across this nation, and in other countries as well, clarinet players—those active and with talent—have taken up their horns and played in memory of Benny. But also those of little talent, those who still have horns in dusty cases, got out their clarinets, tested the reed, possibly shaved it a little with a razor blade, lubricated the cork of the joints, tried a chromatic scale, or, failing that, blew a few notes in tribute to the master, as I did.

**EUGENE J. MCCARTHY**

Eugene J. McCarthy writes frequently for THE NEW REPUBLIC.

Lies from the lie detector.

# POLYGRAPH FEVER

IT HAS LONG been believed that there can be objective measures of innocence or guilt, veracity or deceit. During the Middle Ages there was trial by ordeal. In ancient China miscreants were forced to chew rice. If their mouths were dry afterward, they were considered guilty. Today we have the polygraph.

The idea that a physiological response—blood pressure, in this case—could be used to test for truthfulness was first advanced in 1895 by the Italian criminologist and phrenologist Cesare Lombroso. In the 1930s, William Mouton Marston added measurements of respiration and perspiration and called his machine the polygraph. The U.S. Court of Appeals found no scientific evidence supporting Marston's claims for the device, and he was driven out of the profession he founded. Marston went on to create the comic book character Wonder Woman.

The federal court system still refuses to enter into evidence test results from Marston's wonder machine, but nearly half of the state courts permit polygraph tests under some circumstances, and its use is on the rise among private employers and in the federal government. Desperate to do something about the steady flow of classified information to the press and beyond our borders, the Reagan administration has repeatedly pushed the polygraph as a technological watchdog over the government's vital secrets. And private employers, facing billions of dollars worth of losses from employee theft and other misconduct, order perhaps as many as one million tests a year.

In the business world, the popularity of the polygraph means that countless Americans will be refused employment or fired for failing a test that misidentifies truthful persons as liars perhaps as much as half the time. In the public sector, where several agencies are relying more and more on the polygraph to guard against espionage, it means trying to ensure our national security with an electronic Maginot Line. The polygraph, in fact, detects stress, which often occurs just because a person is being subjected to a test that could result in imprisonment or loss of a job. So shaky is the scientific grounding of polygraphy that the FBI forbids polygraph dragnets, and the American Psychological Association prohibits its members from administering tests.

Congress is now considering a bill, co-sponsored by Orrin Hatch and Edward Kennedy, forbidding polygraph testing by private employers. But sentiment in the White House and on Capitol Hill seems to favor use of the polygraph in the defense and intelligence communities, and perhaps also among the thousands of other federal employees with security clearances. In December the administration quickly shelved a NSC directive to expand polygraph testing after Secretary of State George Shultz threatened to resign. But President Reagan revived the proposal in a January press conference, and a special security task force is



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

supposed to be working on recommendations for presidential instructions implementing the directive.

There are, of course, important civil liberties objections to the use of the polygraph. There is the question of personal privacy and a related one of whether the government can require citizens to answer questions about criminal activity of which they are not even suspect. The specter of government thought police has brought down the wrath of conservatives from William Safire to Jeane Kirkpatrick.

Still, matters of civil liberties are debatable. The scientific validity of the polygraph is not. According to a 1983 report by the Office of Technology Assessment, there are "no field studies on the validity of polygraph testing for pre-employment screening or periodic screening"—exactly the kind of testing the government does, and hopes to expand. OTA noted that although there are studies that provide data on its use in another application—focused investigations of actual incidents—all "had substantial problems of research design." These studies claimed accuracies of lie detection anywhere from 50.6 to 98.6 percent, and truth detection from 12.5 to 94.1 percent. In other words, notes Dr. David Lykken, a psychiatrist at the University of Minnesota, the polygraph is only slightly better at detecting lies than a coin flip.

The OTA report confirmed what many researchers have found. John F. Beary III, now an associate dean at Georgetown University Medical School, wrote a report critical of the polygraph while he was an acting assistant secretary of defense three years ago. "There is no physiological response unique to lying," Beary asserts. Lykken keeps a log of people falsely implicated in wrongdoing by polygraph tests. A Los Angeles cashier was fired after a polygraph exam revealed he had given his mother a discount at the register; he was later able to show that his mother had died five years earlier. An Ohio man was imprisoned for the murder of a friend in 1978 after failing a polygraph test; he was released when police caught the real killers. In an amusing segment on "60 Minutes" last spring, three polygraph firms implicated three separate employees of a CBS-owned company for stealing a camera, despite the fact that no camera had been taken.

POLYGRAPH PROPONENTS usually claim that inaccurate results point to inadequate training or improper technique, not to the machine's inherent flaws. Standards are obviously lax. Testers in private industry can be certified with even less training than those in the government or, in many states, none at all. The graduates of the government's polygraph training school at Fort McClellan only take a 14-week course, followed by ten weeks of practice—less training than most beauticians receive.

Advocates of the polygraph, especially within the government, rely on substantial anecdotal evidence to support their case. Thousands of job applicants at the National Security Agency, for instance, when screened by agency polygraphers, have confessed to crimes. All of them had cleared the agency's traditional background checks. This has become a favorite Reagan anecdote. What the president doesn't say is that they were not caught by the machine but confessed because they mistakenly thought it works. The NSA experience would appear to be more a comment on the purported rigor of its background checks than on the "utility" of the polygraph. Spies are not likely to be so fooled. Intelligence and polygraph experts believe that the KGB and perhaps other foreign intelligence services train their moles in deceiving the machine.

The biggest problem with polygraph screening, however, is not with its accuracy in detecting spies or other criminals but with the large number of innocents who become wrongly accused. Imagine that the polygraph falsely identifies a security violator one percent of the time—a rate far superior to what even polygraph advocates claim. A single screening of 10,000 employees among whom there is a single spy, then, would produce a pool of approximately 100 persons cast as spies—but the polygraph would be of no use in determining which one was the guilty party. Indeed, the offender might well not even be in the sample. A recent study by Beary and two other physicians cited in the June issue of *Discover* magazine suggests that a more likely result of a test of 10,000 employees would be a pool of more than 3,500 potential spies—and a significant chance that the real spy had escaped detection. What would the government do with those 3,500 workers? Fire them all? Investigate them all? The polygraph, as on most questions, provides no useful answers.

**STEPHEN R. DUJACK**

Stephen R. Dujack is editor of the *Foreign Service Journal*.

THE MONEY CULTURE

# GUESS AGAIN

"I WANT YOU to make a prediction," I say to my 13-year-old daughter one day.

"OK."

"Do you think that yields on 30-year Treasury bonds will be higher or lower in six months than they are now?"

"Huh? What are Treasury bonds?" she asks.

"You don't need to know that to make a prediction."

"What's a yield?"

"You don't need to know that either. Just tell me, higher or lower."

"Can I have a quarter?"

I give her a quarter, and she flips it, then sticks it in her pocket.

"Heads. So, higher," she says.

Judging from their recent performance, economic forecasters, some of them earning over a million bucks a year, are less likely to predict the direction of interest rates—a



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

simple 50-50 proposition—than my daughter and her (actually, *my*) quarter.

William C. Melton, senior economist for IDS Financial Services, recently analyzed the published predictions of about 50 top economists. They did lousy. At the beginning of 1985, the yield on 30-year Treasury bonds was 10.5 percent. Eighteen economists said that rates would fall during the year, and 27 said they would rise. They actually fell sharply, to 9.27 percent. In 1984 the same thing had happened: 17 economists said down and 30 said up. The correct answer was "down a lot"—yields on long-term bonds dropped nearly two percentage points. In 1983, 18 said up and 32 said down. The right answer was up.

Predicting interest rates on bonds is only one area where economists and financial experts fail abysmally. Their forecasts of the unemployment rate, the Consumer Price Index, and the gross national product aren't much better. Stock market predictions are even worse. In *The New Contrarian Investment Strategy* (1982), David Dreman cites 52 surveys, from 1929 to 1980, in which market experts picked the stocks or industry groups that they thought would do best for the year ahead: "Overall, the favorite stocks and industries of large groups of money managers and analysts did worse than the market [as measured by the Standard & Poor's 500 Index] on 40 of 52 occasions—or 77 percent of the time."

Every year the magazine *Trusts and Estates* has asked investment officers with bank trust departments to pick three favorite industries for stock investments for the year ahead. Over 21 years the consensus favorite beat the market as a whole only seven times. In other words, 67 percent of the time these experts were wrong.

In fact, if there is anything consistent about these results, it is that financial experts fail in their predictions around two out of three times. In the interest-rate direction study, for instance, 64 percent of top economists were wrong in 1983, 67 percent in 1984, and 63 percent in 1985.

Last December the *Wall Street Journal* asked 25 hotshot economists where they thought interest rates would be on June 30, 1986. The average estimate was 6.94 percent for Treasury bills and 9.42 percent for bonds. Actual rates at midyear were 5.98 for bills and 7.28 for bonds. Not a single economist predicted that bond rates would be under 8 percent and only five economists said that they would be under 9 percent. Since most of the economists said that rates would rise, anyone who took their advice at the beginning of the year would have sold bonds short (bond prices fall when interest rates rise) and lost a lot of money.

THE HIGHEST PAID and best known economists seem to do the worst. Michael Evans, who frequently appears on TV and radio (big guy with high voice), has called the direction of bond rates wrong in three of the past five years. And one of the years when he was right on direction, he still ended up two and a half percentage points off the mark. Or look at Alan Greenspan, economic adviser to several Republican administrations, including the current one. Industry sources say he made over $1 million last year. Not bad, considering his recent forecasts: in 1984 he said that bond rates would rise to 14.05 percent; they actually fell to 11.54 percent. In 1985 he said that rates would rise to 11 percent; they actually fell to 9.27 percent. And so on.

There is a pattern: forecasters usually think that the future will look like the present. Melton calls this "sideways drift." He cites the case of Data Resources, Inc., one of the largest forecasting firms. Last December long-term bonds were yielding 9.3 to 9.5 percent. "On an annual average basis," writes Melton, "DRI expected the long bond rate to be 9.44 percent in 1986, 9.49 percent in 1987, and 9.48 percent in 1988." This is like saying that since it's rained for the past two days, we'll be flooded a month from now. Greenspan is afflicted with the same disease, as the chart below indicates:

| Actual Bond Rate, Beginning of Year | | Greenspan's Prediction of Change at Year-End | Actual Change at Year-End |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1986* | 9.27 | +0.03 | -1.99 |
| 1985 | 10.50 | +0.50 | -1.23 |
| 1984 | 13.50 | +0.55 | -1.96 |
| 1983 | 10.90 | +0.05 | +0.97 |
| 1982 | 14.00 | -0.25 | -3.57 |

(* 1986 prediction is for first six months)

In June 1985 the economists in the semiannual *Journal* survey called for an average increase of seven-hundredths of a percentage point in bond rates; the actual result was a drop of 1.23 points. In the December 1985 poll, they predicted an increase of eighteen-hundredths of a point; the actual result was a drop of 1.99 points. Have they learned their lesson? Apparently not. In the most recent poll (conducted in June), the 30 economists called for an average increase in bond rates of thirteen-hundredths of a point by year-end. Not a single forecaster said that rates would vary more than one percentage point from where they stood at prediction time.

Why the sideways drift? First, there's a psychological need for economists to believe that the real world is simple. They've reduced it to computer models themselves, haven't they? Economists are like TV sportscasters predicting week after week that the hometown football team will win Sunday's game. Second, sideways predictions are safe. At the end of the year, when he misses by 200 or 300 basis points on his rate prediction, an economist can always say: "Gee. I figured that rates would rise a quarter point from where they were at the end of last year. It was a logical conclusion. How could I have known that Mexico would default on its debt or that OPEC would pull itself together again? Besides, all my colleagues were in the same ballpark."

What bothers economists most, writes Melton, "is probably fear of embarrassment, of appearing incompetent. Such a risk is a serious one, since economists have little to sell other than their expertise and reputation." The big question is how they can sell that expertise and reputation when their predictions are so terrible. We turn to that



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sacred text *The Intelligent Investor* (1973), by Benjamin Graham. "The investor," writes Graham, "can scarcely take seriously the innumerable predictions which appear almost daily. . . . Yet in many cases he pays attention to them and even acts upon them. Why? Because he has been persuaded that it is important for him to form *some* opinion of the future course of the stock market." Graham thinks that it really isn't important to form such an opinion—what you really need to know is whether a particular stock, at present, is undervalued or overvalued. Anyway, the fact is that no one can tell the future. An expert has as much chance of telling you what bond rates are going to be on December 31, 1986, as he does telling you what the winning Maryland lottery number will be that day.

But people still want to know the future. "Virtually every decision that a businessman makes presupposes a forecast," says Greenspan. "There is no way to eliminate economic forecasting from the world of business. We just do the best we can."

AND GREENSPAN IS well-paid for doing the best he can. Most highly regarded independent economists, like Greenspan, sell their forecasts as "subscriptions," for between $10,000 and $50,000 a year. Joe Cobb, president of the Washington, D.C., chapter of the National Association of Business Economists, says that for economists, "Success is based more on their having put together a good reputation and not necessarily on their track record." The main source of a good reputation is prestigious clients. How do you get them? Not necessarily through accurate forecasts. Stephen McNees, vice president and economist of the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, says that CEOs like "bandying about the name of their personal forecaster—even to say, 'He was wrong, and I was right,' while mixing with other important people at a cocktail party." And the chief economist for a corporate planning department (who usually makes between $90,000 and $120,000 a year) will cover his ass by buttressing his own forecasts with those purchased from outside firms with big reputations: "I was wrong," he tells the boss, "but so was Gary Shilling, and we paid him 30,000 bucks."

In his new book, *Interest Rates, the Markets, and the New Financial World* (1986), Henry Kaufman of Salomon Brothers (who himself makes over two million a year) tries to shrug off the poor performance of economists: "Whatever the overall record may be, it is probably no worse and perhaps better than in other fields of endeavor, where forecasts are not reported and publicized." (Kaufman, by the way, doesn't participate in public surveys, like those in the *Journal* and *Institutional Investor*.) He then quotes Wilbur Wright as saying in 1901 that "man won't fly for a thousand years." Kaufman is right, of course. No one can tell the future in any endeavor. But economists make their reputations and fortunes on that premise. Wilbur Wright never tried to peddle his forecasting prowess; he just got into a plane and flew.

**JAMES K. GLASSMAN**

Public housing for sale.

# PRIVATE PROJECT

EARLIER THIS year Merrian and Mary Snyder bought the two-story house they had been renting in McKeesport, Pennsylvania, a troubled industrial city outside Pittsburgh. Stories about the new homeowners appeared on the "Today" show and in newspapers across the country. "This is a second chance for us," said the 56-year-old Mrs. Snyder. "I never dreamed of owning a home."

The Snyders' purchase was no ordinary real estate transaction. They bought their house from the McKeesport Housing Authority, the public housing agency that had been their landlord for 17 years. They are the first public housing tenants in the nation to become homeowners as part of a Reagan administration "demonstration program" to sell tenants 1,600 public housing units owned by 18 local housing authorities. If successful, the administration plans to expand the program and "privatize" much of the nation's 1.3 million public housing units.

But the Reagan plan is unworkable. The vast majority of America's public housing tenants are too poor to purchase their units without substantial federal subsidies—which are emphatically not part of the final program. The Snyders' family income is over $20,000—more than three times the average income of public housing tenants. Some buyers might benefit from the program. Most, however, would be unable to keep up with the costs of homeownership. Virtually all public housing tenants would continue to live in apartments where rents have been raised and funds for maintenance and repairs have been cut. And the many families on public housing waiting lists are out of luck. With congressional approval, Reagan has stopped funding for any additional public housing.

The plan to sell public housing is a British import. Under Margaret Thatcher, more than half a million units of public "council housing" have been sold to renters. The program has been very popular, helping the government gain support among traditional Labour voters. In the early 1980s, American conservatives—led by the Heritage Foundation—proposed bringing Thatcher's program here. The President's Commission on Housing—composed primarily of private developers and bankers—endorsed the idea in its 1982 report. Without waiting for the results of the Reagan demonstration program, Representative Jack Kemp introduced legislation in 1984 that would provide all public housing tenants with the "right to buy" their units. President Reagan embraced the plan in his 1985 State of the Union address: "It is time that all public housing residents have that opportunity of ownership." Kemp's expanded proposal recently passed in the House. A similar bill is under consideration in the Senate.

Supporters all say that the British experience proves the program's feasibility. But there is a vast difference between American and British public housing (as staff mem-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bers at HUD futilely attempted to point out). In Britain it represents one-third of the nation's entire housing stock, and its residents represent a broad spectrum of the population. In 40 percent of the units, there are two or more wage earners; only 29 percent of council housing units—primarily for the elderly—have no earner. And local public housing agencies do not evict families, as agencies do here, when their incomes rise above the original selection standards. American public housing represents only 1.3 percent of the nation's housing—the lowest by far of any industrial nation. Its occupants are primarily very poor; 62 percent are minorities and 46 percent are elderly. A 1979 survey (the latest figures HUD has) reported an average household income of $5,033; only 30 percent depended primarily on wages and salaries for income.

In Britain public housing is predominantly for single families; less than one-quarter consists of apartments. In the United States, only 20 percent of public housing is single-family; most residents live in apartment buildings. Moreover, British public housing is much newer and in better physical condition that the nation's private housing stock. In the United States—where public housing is older and lacks enough funds to provide adequate maintenance—buildings are often in poor physical shape.

One of the major goals of Reagan's program is to get rid of the worst units, which require the deepest subsidies. But the British found, not surprisingly, that the best units sell, and that the tenants most likely to buy are those with the highest incomes. This leaves the worst units, housing the poorest tenants, in the public housing inventory.

REAGAN'S "demonstration program" is designed to prove the critics wrong. Like many experiments, it is rigged to get the desired results. For example, 77 percent of the units offered for sale in the demonstration program were single-family homes. These houses are newer, need fewer repairs, and are generally located in attractive residential areas. The tenants selected have higher incomes than their counterparts still in public housing. And HUD is currently offering them substantial subsidies, including dramatically reduced mortgages, down payments, and sales prices.

Under the demonstration program, the homeowners' monthly costs will range from $150 to $575. The Snyders paid $25,000 for their home with no down payment; their monthly payments will be $410. Using the government's yardstick of paying 30 percent of household income for housing, this is more than twice what the typical public housing tenant can afford. And that measure doesn't leave low-income tenants much to pay for food, transportation, clothing, and other necessities. Those who do buy are likely to fall behind on their payments. Within a few years, we can expect a wave of foreclosures among these new homeowners.

There are over 3,000 local public housing agencies across the country, but only 35 applied to participate in the demonstration program. Lowell, Massachusetts, one of the 18 cities selected, withdrew after a consultant's study found that the tenants could not afford $350 a month, even if they had to pay only a token purchase price and if their property taxes were abated. The St. Louis Housing Authority did not even bother to apply. With more than 5,000 low-income people on its waiting list, Michael Jones, the authority's director, testified in April at a congressional hearing on the program: "It is incumbent upon us to increase the number of rental units, not decrease them. Every unit placed in any homeownership program is no longer available to rent to other low-income Americans."

Democratic Representative Barney Frank of Massachusetts, who held the hearing, points out that the Reagan program provides no guarantee that once the units are sold to low-income tenants they will remain available to the poor. Without long-term controls of the resale prices, the new owners could sell their new homes at a much higher price to wealthier buyers—in what Frank refers to as a government-subsidized "windfall profit."

PART OF THE appeal of Reagan's plan springs from widespread perceptions about the failure of public housing programs. They are, indeed, a mixed bag. Most Americans associate public housing with the most visible "projects"—overcrowded high-rises plagued with crime, drugs, graffiti, and related social problems. Yet today most public housing developments are well-managed and serve the poor well, and most projects built in the last decade are duplexes and town houses. The major difficulty for local administrators of public housing is inadequate funding. Above all, public housing's problems are not, as conservatives have said, the result of too much government interference in the private market. On the contrary, they stem from too much private-sector interference in public housing policy.

Public housing was first introduced in 1937, promoted primarily as a public works jobs program. The private real estate and banking industries, fearing competition and claiming that public housing was an opening wedge for socialism, successfully pressured Congress to limit the program to the poor. Private realtors and businessmen dominated local housing authorities, determining whether, where, and how public housing got built.

Before World War II, the public housing program was small, mainly serving white families severely hurt by the Depression. During the war, it was expanded to house defense workers, many of whom remained afterward. By the 1950s, however, the composition began to change. Many of the veterans were either evicted (because their incomes had risen) or had moved to take advantage of federal homeownership programs, sponsored by the Federal Housing Administration and the Veterans Administration. The new public housing residents were increasingly those low-income folks displaced by the federal urban renewal program. Many were black slum-dwellers or recent arrivals from the South.

Following the ghetto revolts of the 1960s, the federal government initiated several rent and ownership programs as alternatives to public housing for the poor. The programs resulted in another 2.5 million units but primarily benefited the lenders, developers, landlords, and specu-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lators, who took advantage of government-insured low-interest mortgages, generous rent subsidies, and substantial tax breaks.

These federal programs have been a small safety valve to relieve some of the pressure on a private housing system that cannot provide adequate housing for the poor. But during the 1980s, despite growing waiting lists and rapidly increasing numbers of homeless Americans, the Reagan administration has made severe cutbacks in low-income housing programs. In 1981 the federal government allocated $30 billion for low-income housing. In 1986 Reagan asked for $500 million. He requested no new funds for 1987.

Since Reagan took office, housing assistance for the rich (primarily tax subsidies) has climbed, while housing subsidies for the poor (such as public housing) have declined sharply. Because these low-income subsidies are more visible than the hidden (tax) subsidies to the rich, few Americans worry about getting the rich off "welfare." The poor actually receive the tiniest part of government housing subsidies. The largest, which allows homeowners to deduct all property taxes and mortgage interest payments from federal income taxes, will cost the government an estimated $38 billion in lost revenues this year alone (compared to $23 billion in 1980). This is almost four times the entire HUD annual budget. About three-quarters of these regressive benefits go to the richest 20 percent of taxpayers, and one-quarter to the wealthiest seven percent of households. Most homeowners benefit minimally from such deductions; half do not claim them at all. Tenants are not eligible.

For many years, the National Low-Income Housing Coalition has called for spreading the benefits to low- and moderate-income owners. It proposes a ceiling on homeowner tax benefits, or a tax credit based on income, as well as eliminating the benefits for second and third homes. Two years ago, Reagan considered abolishing the homeowner deduction as part of his tax reform package, but pressure from the real estate industry led to a hasty retreat.

IF THERE IS a lesson to be learned from Europe, it is not to sell off public housing. The success of Europe's postwar housing experience is its insistence that the government help provide housing for the middle class as well as the poor. Public and social (non-profit) housing is less costly to build and maintain because it is done through direct grants rather than by subsidizing lenders and builders. It enjoys widespread public support because it is not stigmatized as "poor people's housing" and is designed to resemble privately built housing. The only comparable American program is the 450,000 units of family housing constructed by the U.S. military. It is financed and operated almost entirely by direct capital grants appropriated by Congress—eliminating both credit and speculative resales that drive up the cost of private housing.

If some public housing is to be sold, it should be transformed into resident-owned limited-equity cooperatives. This is a midpoint between renting and owning. It gives occupants greater control over their homes, and by restricting the resale prices it keeps them affordable over the long run. But to make it work, the government would have to provide residents with substantial subsidies. These would include help to repair the long-neglected projects, funds to help residents pay the monthly costs of ownership and maintenance, and adequate training to give owner-residents the tools to manage the co-ops. Any way you approach it, government support is needed to house the poor, to fill the gap between what it costs to build housing and what low-income renters and owners can afford to pay.

The Reagan administration claims that its housing plan both illustrates an ongoing commitment to the free market and a vigorous new approach to the problems of the underclass. In fact, the plan will simply hasten the already drastic decline in the housing standards of the poor. When its eight years are complete, someone will write a book on the Reagan housing legacy. Suggested title: *Future Shack*.

**PETER DREIER**

Peter Dreier is director of housing for the Boston Redevelopment Authority. The views expressed here are his.

THE PRESS

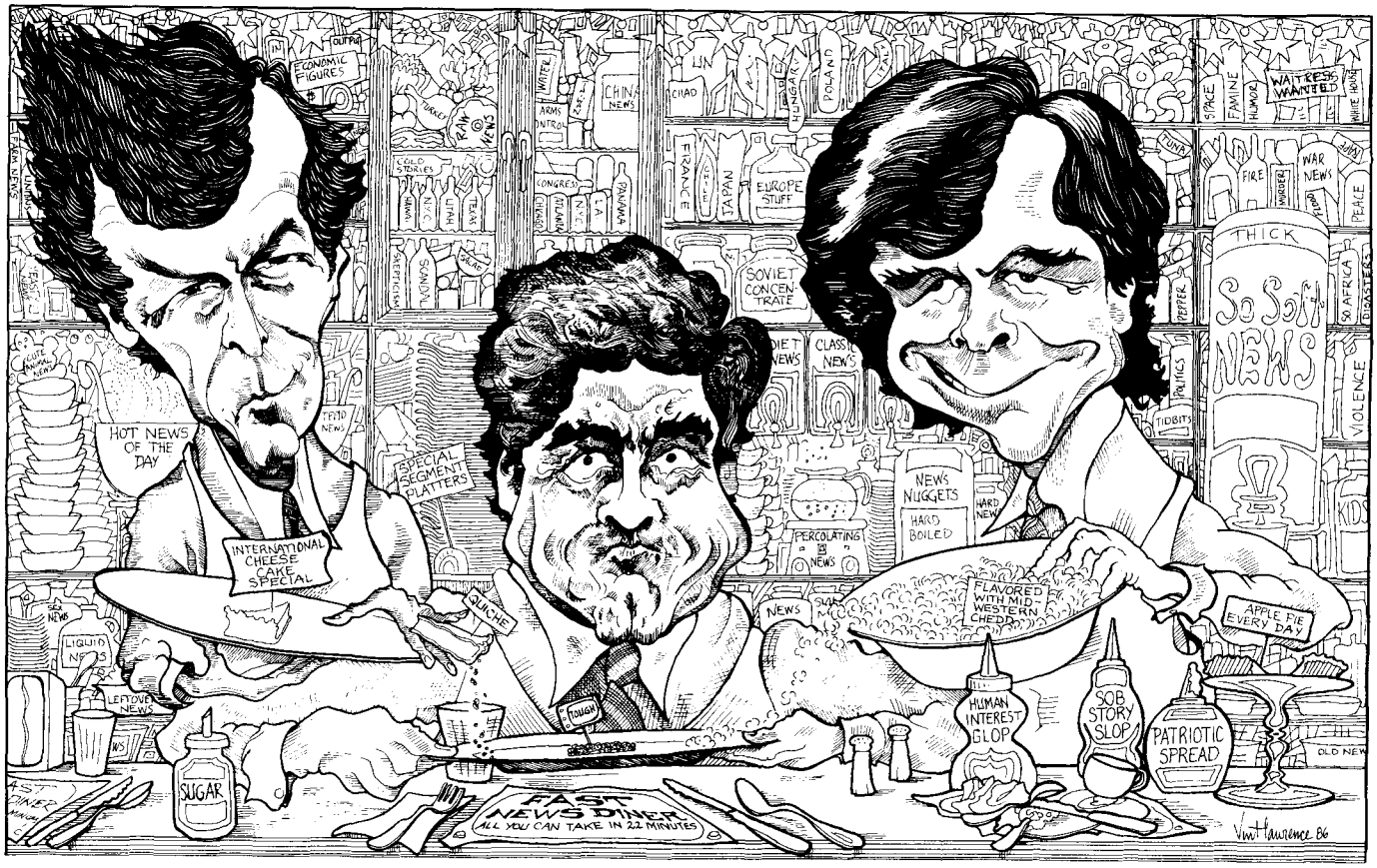
# THE NEWS DERBY

CBS WAS DEALT what Tom Shales of the *Washington Post* called a "demoralizing blow" in late June. For the first time in four years it fell from first place in the Nielsen ratings for evening news shows. NBC took first with 22 percent of the national audience, and CBS and ABC were tied with 21 percent each. Should anyone except network executives care about this? Not really. The ratings measure the popularity of a network's sitcoms, not the quality of its news show. ABC's "World News Tonight" rose to parity in the ratings with the "CBS Evening News" and "NBC Nightly News" several years ago on the strength of ABC's prime-time programming. More recently, the surge to first by "NBC Nightly News" was aided by improved ratings for its entertainment shows—Bill Cosby did it. And in the first week of July, ABC led the news show ratings because its special Liberty Weekend coverage during prime time pulled in a large audience for the entire network.

Forget the ratings. The important question to ask is: Which news show is the best? I tried to answer that by picking a week at random and watching the three each evening, Monday through Friday. I chose what turned out to be a slow news week: July 7 to 11. I assessed each of the nightly newscasts on ten different criteria, and in each category, I rated on a scale of 1 to 3. The best



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED




in every category got 1. Here's how it went.

*Anchors.* After the network's prime-time programming, a news show's ratings are most affected by its anchor. "CBS Evening News" was number one from 1968 to 1981, when Walter Cronkite sat in the anchor's chair. Cronkite was succeeded in 1981 by Dan Rather. For my taste, he is too wound up, too breathless, too inclined to hype stories. Alleged Israeli smuggling of cluster bomb technology posed a "potentially explosive threat" to relations between Israel and the United States, he declared on July 8. That's an overstatement. And why he would wear a sweater in the hottest week of the summer is beyond me. Peter Jennings of ABC and Tom Brokaw of NBC are less histrionic. Brokaw does have a tendency to be too cute in his comments, and he smiles an awful lot. Jennings is more placid. He seems more authoritative, perhaps only because he doesn't smile much. He gets the 1, Brokaw the 2, Rather the 3.

*The Lead.* It's important to start off the newscast with the biggest story of the day. That usually means the story with the broadest national impact. A spectacular event—an airline hijacking, say, or the death of a foreign leader—qualifies. For the week, ABC got the lead right four out of five days, while NBC was correct three times and CBS twice.

On July 9 all three led with the report of the pornography commission. That was the only day they agreed. On July 7 ABC's lead story was the plummeting of the stock market, whereas both NBC and CBS went with the Supreme Court's decision to invalidate a section of the Gramm-Rudman law. Perhaps ABC held back because its court reporter, Tim O'Brien, had already reported weeks before that the Court was going to overturn the law by a vote of 7 to 2. Whatever, the dramatic market drop was a bigger story, certainly more interesting to a national audience than the legalistic court action. NBC led with the stock market the next day, when the financial story wasn't quite as hot. CBS featured an exclusive story by correspondent Rita Braver about the federal investigation of cluster bomb smuggling. This was a good story, but not the lead. Nor was the crash of an experimental bomber in California on July 11 the biggest news that day, but CBS ran it at the top. The dip in the prime interest rate, NBC's lead, or a new threat of poisoned products, ABC's, were better choices. ABC's one clunker was on July 8—an earthquake in California. No one was killed, and the *New York Times* ran the story on page 12 the next day. I suppose ABC just wanted to show footage of damaged homes, roads, trucks, etc. Anyway, ABC gets 1, NBC 2, CBS 3.

*Big Story Coverage.* The question is how thoroughly the main news stories of the day were covered. On two long-running stories, AIDS and drug abuse, all three networks did a fine job. In particular, CBS had an informative piece on July 10 by correspondent Bob Faw about the underreporting of AIDS deaths. But ABC was superior in covering the economy, a big story all week, what with the stock market plunge, the Federal Reserve's cut in the discount rate, the falling prime rate, and the announcement of new economic indicators. Its economics reporter, Dan Cordtz, explains developments in such a way that even economic illiterates can understand. On the day of the pornography report, ABC and CBS took extensive looks at smut and the implications of suppressing it. NBC kissed off the story as a squabble between censors and civil lib-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ertarians. For thoroughness, ABC gets 1, CBS 2, NBC 3.

*Reporters.* The second week in July may not have been the best time for judging network reporters. Many of the best—Brit Hume of ABC, Phil Jones of CBS, Marvin Kalb of NBC—didn't put in appearances. Sam Donaldson, the meddlesome White House correspondent for ABC, got on the air once, horning his way into the July 10 story about the Federal Reserve. But there was enough evidence to reach an opinion. On July 10, when President Reagan went to Dothan, Alabama, for a speech on tax reform, NBC's Robin Lloyd suggested that the president was trying to put pressure on Congress to pass a bill to his liking. Wrong. Bill Plante of CBS got it right in reporting that Reagan's real intent in the Dothan address was to claim credit for achieving tax reform, now a foregone conclusion. NBC also got into trouble with a piece on Senator Russell Long of Louisiana, who is retiring. Correspondent Tom Pettit declared that Long's "absolute power is diminished, but not his influence." Hogwash. The tax reform bill that passed the Senate represents practically everything Long has opposed for three decades. His influence was nil. On another competitive story, the riot at Lorton Reformatory in Virginia on July 10, CBS was again the best. Its correspondent, Bruce Morton, used the Lorton blowup to describe the problem of overcrowding prisons around the country. Dennis Troute of ABC and Robert Hager of NBC simply presented it as a local story. For years, CBS's reporting crew has had the reputation as the smartest, most aggressive and incisive, and that may be deserved. CBS gets 1, ABC 2, NBC 3.

*Features.* CBS certainly does the best soft pieces, again thanks largely to its reporters. The best feature of the week was a three-part series on Navy fighter pilots by David Martin, the sharpest of the network Pentagon reporters. Martin had obviously been working on the series for months, and the three segments were shrewdly broadcast at a time when a movie about Navy pilots, *Top Gun*, is wildly popular. CBS also had an appealing feature on "black velvet" art, the large paintings, sold at roadside stands, of tigers, Elvis Presley, unicorns, and other tacky subjects. NBC had a nice piece by reporter Ken Bode, a former TNR political correspondent, about Lyndon Larouche's intimidation of people in a rural Virginia county, but it's an old story. ABC's best had a new twist on the blackened redfish craze: the story showed how it's caused overcatching of redfish. CBS gets 1, ABC 2, NBC 3.

*Enterprise.* CBS seems to put a higher premium than the other networks on exclusive stories. Braver's piece on bombs-for-Israel was a scoop, as the *Washington Post* acknowledged in matching her story in the next morning's paper. CBS also tried harder in reporting on the crash of what may have been a prototype of a Stealth bomber. NBC aired a tough examination by science reporter Robert Bazell of the highly questionable advertisements that promote calcium supplements as a way of preventing osteoporosis. ABC showed little enterprise. CBS gets 1, NBC 2, ABC 3.

*Slant.* CBS lived up to its reputation as the most liberal, ABC as the most conservative. NBC hugged the middle ground. The coverage of pornography was telling. CBS presented a sidebar about Tupelo, Mississippi, described by correspondent Peter Van Sant as "a pornography-free zone." His report described a small minority of Christian activists pushing the town to the brink of sweeping censorship. On the other hand, ABC offered a sidebar about Father Bruce Ritter, a member of the pornography commission, who told at length of the ruined lives of young runaways sucked into the pornography industry. On other subjects, CBS played up the negative much more than ABC and NBC. On July 11 Rather noted that interest rates had dropped and the inflation rate was flat—good news, in other words. He left it to economics reporter Ray Brady to find a dark cloud. "Those low prices for consumers are coming at a high price," Brady said, pointing to a "devastating" effect on farmers and layoffs in Louisiana, an oil-producing state. NBC gets 1, ABC 2, CBS 3.

*Commentary.* What ever happened to it? Not long ago, George Will was holding forth regularly on ABC and Bill Moyers on CBS. Now only John Chancellor of NBC delivers opinion pieces with any regularity. This is too bad. I think commentary should be a regular segment on the evening shows, even if commentators make fairly obvious points, as Chancellor did. It offers an outlet for opinion, arguably reducing the temptation to slip opinion into supposedly objective news stories. Will is the best of the commentators—crisper, more pointed, better informed—but he's not given a chance more than once or twice a month now. The feeling at ABC, I'm told, is that he hasn't been a popular hit on the evening news. But he gets more air time than Moyers, who gets none these days. CBS says he's busy on documentaries. NBC gets 1, ABC 2, CBS 3.

*Gimmicks.* Like slant, this isn't a category a network should excel in. But ABC does. "The Person of the Week" (for July 7 to 11 it was Pete Rozelle, president of the National Football League) may have increased ratings on Friday, but it's ridiculous. (See "Celebrity Sweepstakes," by Michael Massing, TNR, June 16.) After forking over $10 million for the right to cover Liberty Weekend festivities, ABC wasn't about to abandon the subject quickly. The following week it ran a story on the gospel singer who crooned the national anthem at the closing ceremony, and another on a feud over who should pay if Weekend organizers come up short of cash. NBC has a gimmick of its own, something called "Special Segment." The only thing special is the labeling. The stories are the regular ones—about Russell Long and cocaine use by college kids. CBS was all but gimmick-free. CBS gets 1, NBC 2, ABC 3.

*Ads.* The commercials are truly striking. It's as if the networks assume that most news show viewers are old, constipated people who wear dentures and suffer from recurring headaches. And there are oh, so many of the ads. ABC had five in a row one day on "World News Tonight." The laxative commercials come at you non-stop on all three networks. And if you don't want to take pills, there are lots of high-fiber cereals that come highly recommended. The only appealing spots are schmaltzy ones for Gallo



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

wines. Don't Lite Beer drinkers watch the evening news? Nobody gets any points on this one.

Let's add up the numbers. Remember, the low score wins. ABC comes out a narrow winner with 17, closely followed by CBS with 18, and NBC with 19. The actual ratings for the week showed the three news shows in a dead heat, each with 22 percent of the audience. This seems to support those who insist that there isn't a dime's worth of difference among the shows. But I stand by my figures. A dime's worth of difference is precisely what there is.

**FRED BARNES**

## Democratic Senate sweepstakes.

# WIN NOW, PAY LATER

ONE OF THE worst things that could happen to the Democratic Party will probably happen this year. The Democrats will regain control of the Senate. Party leaders and political commentators will proclaim the end of the Reagan revolution. Democrats will stop worrying about who they are and what they stand for. The Great Restoration will be under way: the Senate in 1986, the White House in 1988.

We've been through all this before. Remember 1982? The worst recession in postwar history gave the Democrats 26 new House seats and seven new governors. As a result, the party stopped examining the lessons of 1980. Reaganism was clearly a failure, an aberration—"the Reagan detour," as Richard Reeves called it. In 1984, it was said, the voters would reverse the mandate of 1980. Democrats were wrong then, and they will repeat the mistake this year. Big Democratic gains in 1986 will mean as much for 1988 as the gains of 1982 meant for 1984: nothing.

What about all the evidence showing that Americans have not shifted to the right? A CBS News/*New York Times* poll last January reported that "on a range of ideological questions first asked about five years ago, no clear swing to the right has been discerned." Thomas Ferguson and Joel Rogers reviewed an enormous quantity of survey data in the May issue of the *Atlantic Monthly* and concluded that America's turn to the right is "a myth." On issue after issue, the public's policy preferences have remained stable or shifted to the left since 1981. A recent Gallup poll shows no shift in the public's self-described political ideology over the past ten years. Conservatives outnumbered liberals by 49 to 31 percent in 1976 and by 50 to 33 percent in 1986.

These polls have a pernicious effect. They encourage liberals to believe that "none of this is really happening." They give Democrats an excuse not to do something they don't want to do—namely, modernize the party's message. The polling evidence is not wrong. But there is more to the story. The Reagan revolution was not caused by an ideological shift, but by a populist reaction against Big Government and the inflationary trend of the 1970s. Beginning with the tax revolt of 1978, Americans rebelled against the excesses and abuses of government power—overspending, waste, fraud. There was never strong support for dismantling the welfare state. It is the same with the current move for tax reform. The public wants to curb the abusive influence of special interests, but there is little sentiment for destroying progressive taxation. President Reagan has his own agenda, of course, and he has skillfully channeled anti-government and anti-tax sentiment to his own ends.

American voters tend to be pragmatic—whatever works must be right—and so they accept the Reagan revolution even if they don't agree with most of it. Gallup shows President Reagan's job approval rating at an all-time high. A record two-thirds of the public say they are satisfied with the way things are going in the country. Those are the views that tend to count in a national election. Most people vote on the basis of performance, not ideology. That is why, according to a recent poll by *U.S. News and World Report*, Americans prefer a conservative to a liberal for their next president, 57 to 32 percent, and want that president to "continue Reagan's policies" rather than "go in a different direction."

SO WHY SHOULD the Democrats have great expectations about 1986? There are three reasons for predicting a Democratic takeover of the Senate this year.

First, the issues. Republicans are seen as better at managing most areas of national policy—controlling inflation, maintaining prosperity, keeping the nation out of war, dealing with the Russians and upholding the nation's military security. Ask the voters what they would criticize about the Reagan administration and they say, "The lack of progress on the deficit and arms control." Then ask them which party they believe would handle each problem better and they say, "The Republicans." On the other hand, Democrats hold the lead when it comes to protecting people and providing government services: protecting the poor, providing jobs for the unemployed, protecting women and minorities, providing quality education, protecting the environment and American jobs. What the public dislikes about the Democratic Party at the national level (tax, tax, spend, spend) it likes at the local level (protect, protect, provide, provide).

Presidential elections are about the overall direction of national policy. State and local elections are about more parochial concerns—benefits and services. That is the Democrats' territory, which is why the party ought to do well in 1986. But it means little for 1988, when the election once again becomes a referendum on national policy. This distinction explains why Americans like having a Republican president and a Democratic Congress. People want to have it both ways: the Republicans in charge of overall economic and foreign policymaking and the Democrats in charge of delivering services and protecting people—in many cases, protecting people from the consequences of



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

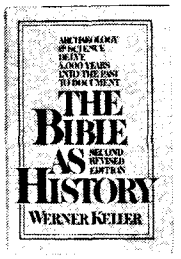
# Three times more history. We guarantee it.

## Take 3 from a larger history selection than you'll find in most consumer clubs for the dramatically low price of $1.00 each. with Trial Membership

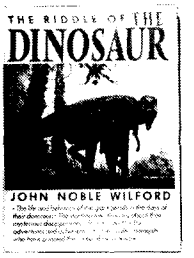
**(Values up to $96.90)**

**FREE BRASS BOOKMARK when you join!**

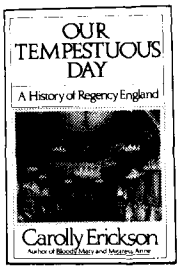
1339. $18.95/**$14.95**



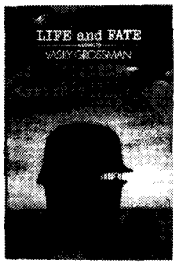

3012. $14.95/**$10.95**




4390.$22.95/**$16.50**

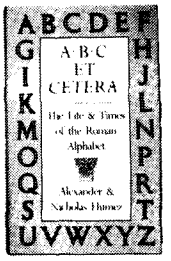



4416. $18.95/**$15.50**

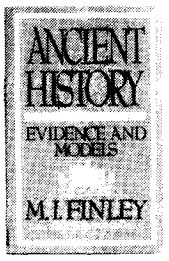



4978.$22.50/**$16.50**

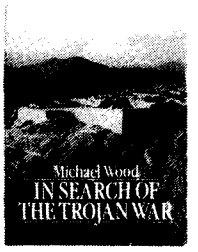
5629. $15.95/**$12.95**




7393. $17.50/**$14.50**

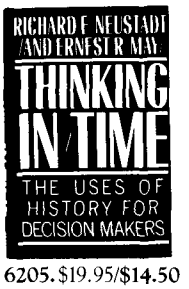



7047. $17.95/**$14.50**

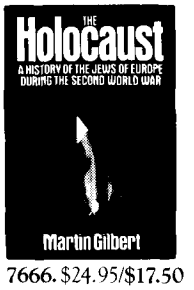



4879.$22.95/**$16.95**

1149. $24.95/**$17.95**




6205. $19.95/**$14.50**




7666. $24.95/**$17.50**

(First price is publishers' list. Boldface is Members' Price.)

**No general interest book club offers more great history books at more substantial savings. If you love history, you'll love the quality, savings and selection you enjoy as a member of the History Book Club.**

**Save up to $96.90 with Trial Membership.** Select four books on this page. Take the first three for just $1.00 each when you pay the low Members' Price on your fourth selection. (Total retail value of up to $96.90).

**Save an average of 30% with low Members' prices.** As a Club Member, you'll enjoy significant savings over retail on each selection you make from the 150-200 volumes featured in our monthly Review (some examples are shown in this ad). You need take only four more books over the next two years. After that, you'll save even more–up to 60%, in fact–on History Book Club Bonus Books.

2535. **MAYA: The Riddle And Rediscovery Of A Lost Civilization,** *by Charles Gallenkamp.* Incorporates a century of research. $22.95/**$16.95**

8474. **The History of Ancient Israel,** *by Michael Grant.* Based on the Hebrew Bible and modern archaeological sources. $19.95/**$14.50**

1453. **The Perspective Of The World: 15th-18th Century (Civilization and Capitalism, Vol. III),** *by Fernand Braudel.* $35.00/**$18.50**

1859. **The Celts: The People Who Came Out Of The Darkness,** *by Gerhard Herm.* An epic study of 2,000 years. $15.00/**$10.50**

8649. **World Religions: From Ancient History To The Present,** *ed. by Geoffrey Parrinder.* Over 320 illustrations. $29.95/**$16.95**

8284. **The Devil's Horsemen: The Mongol Invasion Of Europe,** *by James Chambers.* The story of the Golden Horde. $11.95/**$8.95**

4911. **The Structures Of Everyday Life: The Limits Of The Possible, 15th-18th Century (Civilization And Capitalism, Vol. I),** *by Fernand Braudel.* $31.95/**$15.50**

8490. **The Indian Frontier Of The American West, 1846-1890,** *by Robert M. Utley.* The final half-century of conflict. $19.95/**$13.95**

5652. **The Twelve Caesars,** *by Michael Grant.* A timely look at the power, successes and failures of the Caesars. $15.95/**$10.95**

3996. **Jesus Through The Centuries: His Place In The History Of Culture,** *by Jaroslav Pelikan.* A work of mastery. $22.50/**$16.50**

3897. **Move Your Shadow: South Africa, Black & White,** *by Joseph Lelyveld.* Reports on this troubled land and apartheid. $18.95/**$14.50**

1743. **Russia And The Golden Horde: The Mongol Impact on Medieval Russia History,** *by Charles J. Halperin.* $22.50/**$15.50**

1172. **A History Of The Vikings: Revised Edition,** *by Gwyn Jones.* The definitive account of the Viking Age and World. $25.00/**$16.50**

3103. **The Zimmermann Telegram,** *by Barbara W. Tuchman.* A classic work of World War I history. *"A true, lucid thriller."*–The New York Times $14.95/**$12.95**

4630. **Why The South Lost The Civil War,** *by Richard Beringer, Herman Hattaway, Archer Jones & William Still, Jr.* How the erosion of Confederate nationalism led to defeat. $29.95/**$18.00**

5264. **Novus Ordo Seclorum: The Intellectual Origins Of The Constitution,** *by Forrest McDonald.* The first major interpretation of the framing of the Constitution in more than two decades. $25.00/**$17.00**

4648. **Hitler's Mistakes,** *by Ronald Lewin.* The shortcomings of the Fuehrer–his persistent errors in judgment and his unnecessary actions. $14.95/**$12.50**

4432. **"And I Was There": Pearl Harbor And Midway–Breaking The Secrets,** *by Rear Adm. Edwin Layton, & Pineau & Costello.* $19.95/**$15.50**

**How the Club Works:** About every 4 weeks, (14 times per year), you'll receive a new issue of *The History Book Club Review* and a dated reply card. If you want the Editors' Choice, do nothing–the book will come automatically. If you want another book, or no book at all, return the card by the date specified. (Book shipments will be charged to your account at low Members' Prices, plus postage and packing).

If you receive an unwanted book because you had less than 10 days to decide, simply return it and pay nothing. We guarantee postage.

**Join the History Book Club today–and save!**

NST86F

**The History Book Club**

YES, HBC. Please activate my Trial Membership and send me the four books whose numbers I have entered below. Bill the first three at $1.00 each and the fourth at the low Members' Price plus postage and packing. Also send me my free HBC brass bookmark (No. 1040).

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |

I may return these books within three weeks at your expense and owe nothing. Or, I will buy four more books over the next two years, not including my choices above. Either the Club or I may cancel my membership any time thereafter. All Club purchases are at low Members' Prices, and a postage-and-packing fee is added to all shipments.

Print Name_____

Address_____

City_____

State_____ Zip_____

NU25WB

**U.S. and Canada mail to: the History Book Club, Dept. N, 40 Guernsey Street, Box 790, Stamford, CT 06904-0790**

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the Republican policies they like at the presidential level.

Second, television. All Senate races are statewide races, and so all are covered on television. The result is that incumbents and challengers are more evenly matched. (Few House races are covered on TV and few House candidates buy TV advertising; a congressional district is usually too small to match a media market. As a result, House incumbents, unlike those in the Senate, are relatively safe.) Hitherto unknown Senate challengers are becoming more visible simply because they are getting TV coverage—particularly after they win primary victories—and senators running for re-election don't look as safe now as they did a few months ago. That is bad news for the GOP, which has twice as many exposed incumbents as the Democrats. Right now 12 Republican seats, and only four Democratic seats, look either dubious or close.

So look for obscure Senate challengers to start moving up in the polls between now and November 4. Some of them will even beat well-known incumbents. That's how Mack Mattingly, Steven Symms, Dan Quayle, Charles Grassley, Warren Rudman, Alfonse D'Amato, John East, James Abdnor, Slade Gorton, and Robert Kasten got to the Senate in 1980.

REALIZING THEIR vulnerability, the "Class of 1980" Republican senators have been conspicuous in their dedication to constituency service. For the most part, they have failed to assume a high legislative or ideological profile. That is a surprise to many observers, who expected the 1980 Republicans to be the shock troops of the Reagan revolution. Although they generally have been loyal to the president, their principal commitment has been to their states. Thus freshman Republican Alfonse D'Amato joined other New Yorkers in criticizing the provision in Reagan's tax reform plan that would have ended the deductibility of state and local taxes. And during the farm credit crisis, freshman Republican Charles Grassley of Iowa attacked Pentagon waste in order to rationalize emergency federal help for farmers. Both senators are enjoying high approval ratings.

A member of Congress must choose between striking a high legislative profile—becoming a nationally known expert in some issue area or a spokesman for some point of view—and keeping a low profile and tending to constituency interests. New York Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan is a high-profile politician; voters nationwide look to him for intellectual leadership on foreign affairs and social policy. His colleague, D'Amato, has kept a low legislative profile; New Yorkers go to him for services and favors. Similarly, California Senator Pete Wilson is almost invisible in Washington, but he has cultivated an image of low-key effectiveness in California. Senator Alan Cranston, who used to be seen as hardworking, effective, and relatively colorless, changed his profile when he ran for president in 1984. He turned out to be the most liberal candidate in the field, after Jesse Jackson. Cranston is now seen as a highly ideological figure, and his approval ratings in California have suffered.

Nevertheless, it is not clear that a low legislative profile will protect senators as well as it does representatives. House elections tend to turn on voters' feelings about the incumbent, and those feelings are generally favorable. Over 90 percent of House members who run for re-election regularly win, usually on a vote of personal confidence. Senate elections are more responsive to issues and to the political mood of the electorate. That includes Senator D'Amato, whose conservative record is likely to become the focus of the campaign once his challenger is nominated in September.

THE FINAL AND most important factor is voter turnout. Senators up for re-election this year will face a significantly different electorate than they faced in 1980—one much less friendly to Republicans. From a presidential year to a midterm year, turnout in Senate elections always drops, and that always works to the disadvantage of the president's party. Look at what happened in the 17 states that held Senate elections in 1980 and again in 1982. Turnout dropped from 50 to 40 percent of the voting-age population. The Republicans lost 3.2 million votes, while the Democrats lost 2.5 million.

Thus senators elected in 1980 will probably face a 20 percent smaller electorate in 1986. The voters who disappear in midterm years are casual voters who go to the polls once every four years, for presidential elections. They have no strong partisan or ideological inclinations. They are Zeitgeist voters who register the mood of the country. In 1980 that mood was profoundly anti-Democratic. In 1986 the presidential-year bonus vote will vanish—and that should be more than enough to sweep away many Republicans who won by slim margins in 1980. (Sixteen freshmen GOP senators were elected with an average of 53 percent of the vote in 1980. Five of them squeaked by with 50 percent or less.)

In fact, the Democrats who lost their Senate seats in 1980 were already highly vulnerable. Their previous election had been in the Watergate year, 1974, when vast numbers of embarrassed Republicans stayed home. Six years later the 1980 presidential bonus vote overwhelmed these Democrats. The appearance and disappearance of this bonus vote is one of the reliable, rhythmic features of American politics. It explains why, after a president is elected, his party always loses congressional seats at the ensuing midterm.

Not only was there a presidential bonus vote favoring the GOP in 1980, but the Democratic abstention rate that year was very high. Polls reveal that about one out of every four people who had voted for Jimmy Carter in 1976 stayed home in 1980. They couldn't bring themselves to vote for Carter again, and they were unwilling to take a chance on Reagan. This year there is no reason to expect an exceptionally high level of Democratic abstention.

Whenever a party wins a landslide, it has to defend a great many vulnerable seats at the next election. This year the Republicans have to defend their 1980 Senate landslide—and under far less advantageous conditions. The Democrats will be defending their landslide in the guber-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

natorial elections of 1982 (these days most states elect their governors in midterm years) and are certain to lose a good many governorships. For the House of Representatives, the base year is 1984, when the Republicans made only small gains (14 seats). Neither party is defending a landslide in the House, and so there won't be much change.

Every one of these outcomes—big Democratic gains in the Senate, big Republican gains in governors' races, no big shift in the House—can be predicted in advance, simply by knowing what each party has at stake. Inevitably, the results will be analyzed in November as if they represent some sort of peculiar national mood, or as if they had some great meaning for 1988.

**WILLIAM SCHNEIDER**

William Schneider is a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute and a contributing editor to *National Journal* and the *Los Angeles Times*. His last article for TNR was "The Perils of Populism" (July 15 & 22, 1985).

The rise and fall of a 'special relationship.'

# ROMANCING THE SAUD

## BY BARTON GELLMAN

AT THE HEIGHT of his popularity, Ronald Reagan came closer to congressional defeat on an arms sale than any president before him. And all to swing a small-time and twice-diminished missile deal with Saudi Arabia. For the first time in the history of such sales, Congress voted no, and Reagan's veto escaped override by a single vote.

The missile flap was the first visible sign of a souring in the ten-year romance between the United States and Saudi Arabia. For a decade or so, to successive American administrations, the Saudis were regarded as a powerful and highly desirable ally. They controlled the most important strategic commodity in the world, they were prodigiously wealthy, and they had decisive leverage (or so it seemed) from Cairo to Baghdad and beyond. And Washington had plans for them. They would be a pillar of stability in the Persian Gulf. They would be a bulwark against Soviet penetration. They would be a skilled and willing broker of Arab-Israeli peace. Since 1973 American policy has turned on the rise and disillusionment of all these heady hopes.

From President Reagan to the National Association of Arab Americans, people still portray an essentially unchanged special relationship dating from the Second World War. "The U.S. defense relationship with Saudi Arabia," Reagan said in his May 21 veto message, "was started by President Roosevelt in 1943 and endorsed by every president since." So why the near-derailment of a minor missile transaction? The answer, according to practically everyone, was base domestic politics. "Congress is exhibiting a virulent strain of anti-Arab feeling," said Richard Straus, editor of the *Middle East Policy Survey*. Ed Walsh of the *Washington Post* and Steven Roberts of the *New York Times*, who covered the sale, cited the power of Jewish and pro-Israeli PACs. Charles William Maynes, the editor of *Foreign Policy*, told Hodding Carter on Public Broadcasting's *Capitol Journal* that the Reagan administration was "not really lobbying" for the package.

These observations, true enough, don't explain much. In fact, Washington's passion for Saudi Arabia—which actually dates back only as far as the mid-1970s—has turned into disenchantment a decade later.

In Roosevelt's time, and for decades thereafter, Saudi-American relations had been modest. The ardor was all in Riyadh, then as now concerned about Saudi Arabia's survival as a political entity. By 1932 Ibn Saud had improbably conquered and reunified a land mass four times the size of France, which his ancestors had twice ruled and lost. He spent the next 20 years struggling to keep it, and he wanted American help.

What troubled Ibn Saud, as Nadav Safran observes in *Saudi Arabia*, was a fragility of empire that remains to this day. The kingdom's vast terrain is largely desert wilderness. Its population is sparse—some five or six million—and of dubious cohesion, being historically divided into dozens of tribal groupings. Even its strongest leaders have ruled by blandishment and shrewd coalition. The kingdom's oil wealth lies vulnerably concentrated along the Persian Gulf, and its access to open sea relies entirely on three choke points: the Bab al-Mandab, the Suez Canal, and the Strait of Hormuz. On top of all this the Saudis are surrounded by states whose extreme disparities of wealth, strength, and ideology seem calculated for instability.

Ibn Saud pushed relentlessly for a military alliance with the United States, but Washington took little notice. With the outbreak of World War II, the U.S. government sent lend-lease aid, but further assistance was cut short by an

Barton Gellman is director of foreign policy studies at American Horizons, a foundation chaired by Arizona governor Bruce Babbitt.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

American embargo during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war. The production of oil in commercial quantities, and the gradual diminution of the British in an important strategic environment, piqued American interest in the early 1950s. Ibn Saud never got his alliance, but he did trade access to the Dhahran air base for a treaty of mutual assistance. For the next 20 years Washington's interest was uneven.

Things changed fast in the early 1970s. First came the oil shock. The 1973 embargo, along with Saudi production decisions in the next six years, made a spectacular impression on the Western alliance and the world economy. Although the initial quadrupling of oil prices is now widely thought to have been an uncontrolled consequence of the embargo, it established Saudi Arabia as a force to be reckoned with. Henry Kissinger believed that force could be put to good use. He thought the Saudis had been instrumental both in Egypt's 1972 expulsion of 15,000 Soviet advisers and in Syria's disengagement following the Yom Kippur War.

THESE THREE OBJECTS of desire—an ally inside OPEC, a useful check on the Soviets, and a partner in the search for Arab-Israeli peace—launched the American romance with Saudi Arabia. "We were hoping for a major relationship with Egypt in which the Saudis would foot the bill," recalls William Quandt, who worked for Kissinger at the time. "Meanwhile the Saudis would help with stability on oil prices. In that context it was natural for Kissinger to say, we've got to do something for them." Arms sales, as usual, were the currency of the American courtship. The Nixon-Ford administration promised Saudi Arabia the American warplane of its choice, and Riyadh chose the F-15. Jimmy Carter, who went ahead with that sale in 1978, attached it to a similar package for Israel—metaphorically promoting Saudi Arabia from the friendly moderate of old to coequal with our strongest "special relationship" in the region.

Carter was expecting a lot in return. To the first three goals for Saudi Arabia, he added a fourth: Saudi Arabia would be "a powerful restraining force on terrorists." Carter's national security adviser had yet another mission in mind: the policing of stability in the Persian Gulf. Zbigniew Brzezinski's theory of "newly influential" nations, building on the Nixon Doctrine, led to a so-called Two Pillars policy. Gulf security would rest jointly on the shah's Iran and on Saudi Arabia, the one wielding military power, the other petroleum and cash. "One-and-a-half Pillars is the way we usually joked about it," Quandt says, but reliance on the Saudis was quite serious. When the shah fell to Khomeini, White House talk turned to finding a new second pillar.

All of this depended on the Saudis actually wanting to help us and actually being able to do it. The first was often true, though not always; the second was fantasy. The F-15 sale marked the full bloom of that fantasy in Washington.

John Campbell expressed the prevailing view of the sale in the 1978 "America and the World" issue of *Foreign Affairs*: "The mere listing of these objectives [peace, oil, containment] makes the point that Saudi Arabia is of paramount importance to the United States by virtue of its vast resources of oil, its financial power, its influence on other Arab States, and its opposition to Soviet expansion. . . . Thus when the Saudi government decided to make its request to buy F-15 aircraft a test of America's friendship, the Carter administration got the message." Saudi potency, in other words, was the construct of an American desire. The persistence of this construct in the teeth of the next year's events became a triumph of imagination over experience.

Saudi power mattered most in relation to the Arab world, and later to Iran. Carter, as he reports in his memoirs, had two governing theories:

> Saudi Arabia could play a powerful role in influencing the Syrians, the Jordanians, and the PLO to be cooperative, because the three groups were heavily dependent on Saudi financing. Furthermore, members of the royal family . . . were responsible for the protection of the holiest sites . . . of Islam. This gave them special status in the eyes of other Moslems.

Both theories were naive, like Carter's supplemental belief that Saudis disliked the Soviets primarily for their atheism. Carter was blind to basic power relationships. It hardly followed, for example, that Saudi payments to the likes of Assad and Arafat were a sign of strength, any more than the shopkeeper's to the local mob.

Campbell and Carter had plenty of company in Washington. It seemed impossible to conceive that this wealthy, friendly, and strategically placed kingdom might also be terribly weak—and that its weakness might lead it to harm us.

IN ALL FAIRNESS, Saudi Arabia *looked* less weak in the first years of the Carter administration than it ever had before. Oil, of course, was part of the reason, but other regional considerations were more important. Always hostage to its geographic and demographic vulnerabilities, the kingdom typically maneuvered between contending powers, mediating their disputes where possible and appeasing one and then the other where necessary. In the mid-1970s it played this game skillfully. Safran's book traces Riyadh's complex balancing act in three sets of Middle East power struggles: Egypt versus Syria, Iran versus Iraq, and North Yemen versus South Yemen. So long as the Saudis could find a point of equilibrium among all these contending forces, they made a passable showing of independence.

The whole thing collapsed in late 1978 and 1979. The fall of the shah, the outbreak of war between the two Yemens, and most of all the signing of the Camp David accords forced the Saudis to take sides. "Carter thought the Saudis owed us, and we'd cash in at Camp David," says Quandt. The Saudis, in this scheme, would deliver Jordan and the PLO to the follow-up negotiations, meanwhile keeping the oil market from panicking at the loss of production in Iran. Whatever else the Saudis might have thought of this, the prospect of simultaneous confrontation with the newly united Baghdad-Damascus axis of rejectionists on the one hand and revolutionary Iran on the other looked suicidal.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Riyadh joined the ostracism of Egypt with a vengeance and cut oil production to appease Iran, single-handedly triggering the second devastating oil shock of the decade.

BY 1981, WHEN Ronald Reagan arrived in the White House, it should have been evident that Saudi-American relations were grossly constrained by the kingdom's enthrallment to stronger and more radical powers. Even where Riyadh's vital interests required cooperation with Washington—as at the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan—the Saudis went along as quietly as possible and redoubled their attacks on Egypt by way of compensation.

Yet Reagan's approach was even more inflated than Carter's. In its first weeks in office the administration announced plans to sell the Saudis the most expensive and technologically sophisticated arms package in American history: $8.5 billion worth of hardware built around the AWACS, an advanced command-and-control plane that we had shared neither with our NATO allies nor with Israel. The sale was a victory for Caspar Weinberger over Alexander Haig, but Haig soon became its theoretician. Haig announced his discovery of a "strategic consensus" among Egypt, Israel, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia—a budding solidarity before the common Soviet threat.

The Saudis announced he was wrong. But the AWACS salesmen carried on. "Saudi Arabia is the center of the pro-Western forces in Islam," Undersecretary of State James Buckley told a House subcommittee. Riyadh exerts "leadership and influence in the Arab world." In fact, "It is developing an influence that reaches far beyond the Arab World." Fred Iklé, Buckley's counterpart at the Pentagon, compared Saudi Arabia to Egypt in 1976—poised, he implied, to make a breakthrough for peace.

"Because they had so much money," says Geoffrey Kemp, the Middle East specialist on the National Security Council from 1981 to 1985, "there was the parallel expectation that this would be translated into diplomatic power. It's not that simple, and that's what we've found out." Kemp concedes that the public depiction of the Saudis "tended to be rhetorical and grandiose," but he adds, "The question is whether anyone really believed it in the first place." Another administration official, still in office, maintains that "expectations for Saudi Arabia have never been stratospheric." No one interviewed for this article could recall entertaining any such expectations. This alone is telling: the outer limits of the plausible are not what they once were.

The last holdouts for high expectations, paradoxically, are the kingdom's debunkers. There is a demonic view of Saudi Arabia, propounded energetically by the America-Israel Public Affairs Committee, which shares with the kingdom's romancers a conviction that it has, well, leadership and influence in the Arab world. AIPAC pictures Riyadh as a leading enemy of Israel and a deliberate and potent obstacle to American interests in the Gulf: the Saudis have *refused* to host American bases, *refused* to punish Syrian intransigence, *refused* to force Yasir Arafat to recognize Israel. Imagine.

The editors of THE NEW REPUBLIC, rightly skeptical all these years about the "rhetoric and illusions" about Saudi power, are not immune to a similar temptation. An editorial last month imputed to the Saudis a "political will" to effect the disappearance of Israel, and added: "They have consistently subsidized rejectionism and they have systematically thwarted every American effort to promote peace." Well, yes, but they subsidize our friends, too: Morocco, Jordan, Sudan, the Afghani mujahadeen. Truth is, they'll subsidize anyone. If they have an autonomous political will, it reaches little past survival.

Whether for this reason or for AIPAC's, the Saudis have plainly lost their allure for the Reagan administration. "It is the culmination of years of resentment of the Saudis," a senior White House official told the *Los Angeles Times*. "We used to beg them and they never did anything for us." The oil glut plainly emboldens such sentiments, freeing Washington for the first time since 1973 from a world view that places Saudi Arabia near its center. But the Israeli-Lebanon peace treaty of 1983, George Shultz's Camp David, may well have been the turning point. Shultz had counted on Saudi support for the painstakingly negotiated pact. He blamed Syria most bitterly for its collapse, but he harbors no small resentment of Riyadh's failure to assist.

THE DEVELOPMENT and climax of the recent missile sale shows how far things have moved since then. The Saudis came to Washington with another multibillion-dollar proposal, including 42 additional F-15s. The White House scaled that back to a $354 million resupply of Stingers, Sidewinders, and Harpoons—all already present in the Saudi arsenal. Congress rejected even this in a lopsided and unprecedented vote. To avert an override of his veto, Reagan had to reduce the package yet again, removing the Stingers and finally securing a $265 million sale.

Equally important was the tone of the White House defense. Until the veto fight the administration was reserved, both in the exertions of its spokesmen (Shultz sent word to Congress that he was too busy to testify) and in its portrayal of the stakes. In his veto message, Reagan argued primarily in the negative, concentrating on America's credibility as a supplier and the risks of taking "stability for granted." In the end he lobbied intensely, but by then his capacity to work his will on Congress was the issue. "It came down to Ronald Reagan saying, 'I need this or my leadership will suffer,' " explains one official.

The residual truth in the special relationship is that the United States and Saudi Arabia have vulnerabilities in common. The rise of Soviet power in the Gulf, the unrestrained hegemony of Iran, the outbreak of general war between Arabs and Israelis, or indeed the accession to power of a Saudi Qaddafi would threaten both governments, if not for quite the same reasons. In their own enlightened interest, the Saudis will sometimes act to our benefit. All other things being equal, they even prefer it that way. We ought to return the favor, all other things being equal. Occasionally they are, even in the Middle East. □



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

## I Can Give You Anything But Love

*"About Last Night . . ."*
(Tri-Star)

*Legal Eagles*
(Universal)

A bit of fantasy. It's 1936, you are 25, and you go to a romantic comedy called *"About Last Night . . ."* Of course you can't believe your eyes (much nudity and near-explicit sex) or ears (words that, if you are male, you are by now reluctant to use even among male companions). But at the last, what shocks you most deeply is the film's stance toward love (and thus, in the syllogism of 1936, toward marriage and toward the future itself). That an unmarried woman in a film should sleep with a man, that she should sleep with as many mates as she chooses according to prevailing male standards, that she should openly talk about enjoying sex in stag-party lingo, all this would be like your most florid adolescent daydream; but the dark cloud that hovers above everything is the lack of reference or refuge: the fear of commitment. In this film's vocabulary the word most terrifying to the characters—the *only* word that terrifies them—is "love." In your experience a romantic comedy ends one way: wedding bells. Not a tinkle here.

The wedding-bells ending we can now airily call a formula; but so, by 1986, is the non-wedding-bells ending, or at least a pervasive insecurity about commitment. The importance of formulas is that they are simplified crystallizations both of society's practice and of society's secret wishes. In 1986 the non-marrying (or fearfully marrying) film gives you for a couple of hours both a mirror and an escape. It reflects the lives of a lot of your single contemporaries, who may not be living alone, and in secret it may make you and them wish that your lives were as full of smart cracks and neatness as the picture.

(I'm leaving out of this fantasy the relatively open life of homosexuals today as against 1936. I don't want the Supreme Court cracking down on me, especially since some of the matters mentioned in this film—by heterosexuals—are confirmed by the Court as criminal in many states.)

*"About Last Night . . ."* is far from the worst of the decade's crop of brighter-than-bright films about young people caring for each other, sleeping together, and trying to avoid love. In one way it's unique: it's adapted from a good short play, *Sexual Perversity in Chicago*, by one of our few interesting playwrights, David Mamet. I saw the play when it was done off-Broadway in 1976 and have just read it again; and hindsight lets me perceive that this play is an early important contribution to one of the several theater languages that Mamet has developed. This particular language is naturalism intensified to abstraction, diabolically acute in rhythm, progressing by means of seemingly hostile response, and drummed along throughout with the rat-a-tat of obscenity. Here are the first eight lines of *Sexual Perversity*, between two young men in a bar:

DANNY: So how'd you do last night?
BERNIE: Are you kidding me?
DANNY: Yeah?
BERNIE: Are you fucking kidding me?
DANNY: Yeah?
BERNIE: Are you pulling my leg?
DANNY: So?
BERNIE: So tits out to here so.

(These lines, and more of the scene, are heard under the credits and through the start of the film.) Then in a series of short scenes, the play encloses an encounter between the two men and two young women. It ends with the principal, Danny, who has come closest to being "caught," once again sitting with his pal Bernie, watching women walk by. Romance, of a sort, and sex occur in the play, but they are not the focus. The play is about people who secretly loathe their lives because—in their view, at least—the world has denied them belief in, let alone hope for, love.

The few reviews I've read of *"About Last Night . . ."* have pasted the filmmakers for turning Mamet's play into a romantic comedy. (They have also changed the last names of Danny Shapiro and Debbie Soloman to Martin and Sullivan.) True. It is also true, I think, that a director like Rob Nilsson, who did *Signal 7*, could have made Mamet's play faithfully (and quite cheaply) on videotape with unknown actors, transferred the result to film, and got just about the same distribution that *Signal 7* is getting. Sparse. I and anyone else who admires Mamet would wish that this "Nilsson" version had been made. But we had only to read the ads for *"About Last Night . . ."* to know this had not been done, that—to use a wildly grand comparison—this film is like the Garbo-March *Anna Karenina* compared to Tolstoy. We never get over the filmmakers' meddlings: but we look for some compensations. The Mamet derivation has a few.

Tim Kazurinsky and Denise DeClue, the screenwriters, have kept consider-

### FILMS WORTH SEEING

*Heartburn*. Air pudding, made from Nora Ephron's novel. But Meryl Streep is always worth seeing, and Mike Nichols is at his best with meringue. Comedy-drama about marriage between a New York food writer and a Washington columnist—and their troubles. (Reviewed 7/28/86)

*A Room with a View*. E. M. Forster replicated on the screen with a good eye, a good sense of Edwardian England, and (except for the Lucy) an excellent cast. (3/24/86)

*Tea in the Harem*. A new writer-director, Mehdi Charef, does well with this account of North African adolescents in Paris. Their troubles are familiar; the rendering is exceptional. (6/16/86)

*Vagabond*. Agnès Varda's best work, written and directed with rigor and respect. Sandrine Bonnaire, 18 when she played the lead, wanders the roads of southern France until her accidental death seals her mystery. Profoundly disturbing. (6/2/86)

**SK**

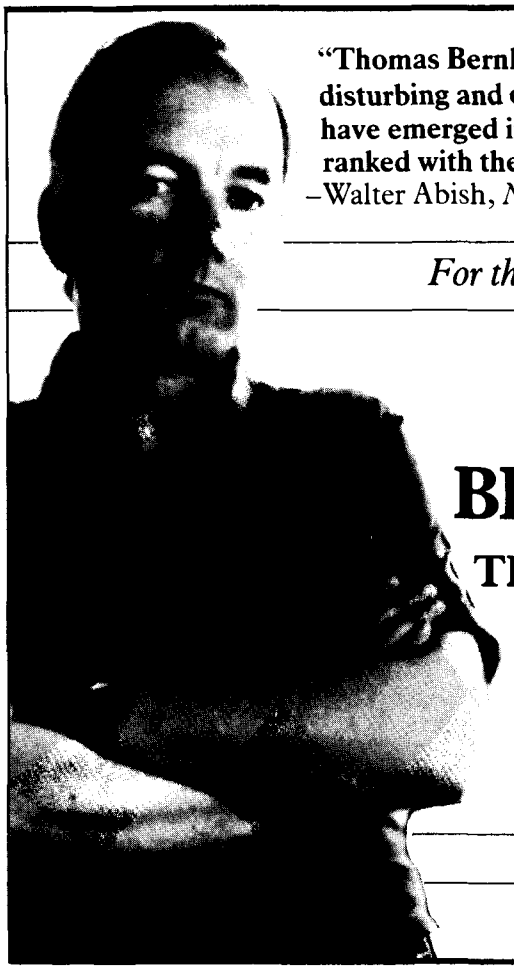


LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

able of Mamet's dialogue and, as far as line-by-line diction is concerned, have filled in the gaps with pretty good Mamet pastiche. The trouble is that neither they nor anyone else on the film has seen the flaw in using Mamet dialogue, or an imitation of it, in a romantic comedy. Mamet is a very specific writer: his language is itself one of his subjects. When the work stops being about people trapped in a hedonistic hell, the language begins to sound like bawdy Neil Simon, enforcedly obscene. In *Sexual Perversity*, as in the later *Glengarry Glen Ross*, the filth is like obscenity in Army language: tiny futile vengeance on powerlessness. The film is a commonplace "fear-of-commitment" item in what has almost become a genre; it is very much softer, gauzier, teased with possible alteration of life than is the play. The obscenity is no longer pathetic; it sounds consciously hip—particularly coming from the women.

Aside from the script—a pretty big "aside"—the film is acceptably made. It's the first feature by Edward Zwick, who was once associated with this journal (he edited the 60th-anniversary anthology of TNR pieces, *Literature and Liberalism*), who was a fellow in directing at the American Film Institute, and who has worked in TV. The soft-focus lovemaking is overdone, possibly because the script was skimpy and it's easier to put in more mattress romping than to write more material; the pretty scenes are egregiously pretty—camera by Andrew Dintenfass—except for one breathtaking shot on an El platform at night. But Zwick has kept the pace lively, has handled skillfully the backgrounds in the many crowded-bar scenes, and has clearly won the confidence of his actors. Rob Lowe, juvenile heartthrob, does nothing wrong. As the girl he's afraid to love, Demi Moore, who has some reminders of Debra Winger (voice especially), shows charm and comic spirit. Her friend, Elizabeth Perkins, who has a touch of Stockard Channing, is appealingly acerbic. James Belushi, who has more than a touch of his late brother, has the gravy part—the freewheeling friend who says what he likes whenever he likes, who can ride on scenes but rarely has to carry them.

I've had a number of requests—all from the same person—to review *Legal Eagles*. I've delayed because it's painful to write about Robert Redford making a fool of himself, and I hoped that if I didn't men-

**"Thomas Bernhard is by far the most disturbing and original literary figure to have emerged in postwar Austria... ranked with the foremost world authors..."**
–Walter Abish, *New York Times Book Review*

*For the first time in paperback*

*Three novels by*

**THOMAS BERNHARD**

**THE LIME WORKS**
$7.95

**CONCRETE**
$5.95

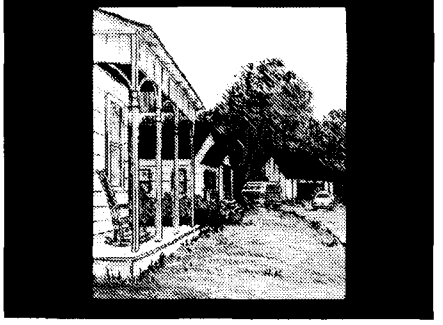
**GARGOYLES**
$6.95

*Phoenix Fiction*

**University of Chicago Press**

NO NEWS IS GOOD
A NOVEL BY *Julie Edelson*

"This splendid first novel manages to jog our memory, conscience and sense of humor simultaneously . . . a unique and memorable book."
*Publishers Weekly*



Cloth, $16.95

NORTH POINT PRESS, 850 TALBOT AVENUE, BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA 94706




LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tion the picture, no one would go. Well, in its first 12 days it took in $18,448,346. Since I haven't been able to consign it to oblivion with my silence, I may as well mourn a bit.

The script is by Jim Cash and Jack Epps Jr., who also wrote *Top Gun*, so we don't have to worry about them for a while. Redford is an assistant district attorney in Manhattan, and in a trial early in the film he opposes Debra Winger, the lawyer for the defense; thus we know the two are going to get together. They do, tracking down art thefts that involve them with a performance artist played by Daryl Hannah. Matters are further complicated because Hannah is the daughter of the artist whose works are the story's center—an artist who was killed in a fire (which starts the film) when Hannah was a child.

It begins as a predictable but bearable comedy about male-female law opponents who get involved with each other; it becomes so ridiculous that it loses all resemblance to a wacky professional comedy, let alone to life. For instance, this assistant DA and this other lawyer break into a warehouse to search for files. Then, when they discover a time bomb ticking away, they jump in a lift loader, crash through the warehouse door, and end up in the river. How many law schools give courses in this?

Hannah is playing I don't know what: I can't imagine what anyone said to her about her part. Winger manages some appeal through the nonsense. Redford, one of our best actors, who reportedly waits as long as he must for scripts he thinks are right and then revises them further, has made the right money choice here, nothing more. The director is Ivan Reitman, whose last contribution to the gaiety of nations was the even more detestable *Ghostbusters*.

# ROBERT BRUSTEIN ON THEATER

## Liberty and Liberties

July has been a month for reflecting on American freedom. The Statue of Liberty was rededicated by President Reagan a few days after the Supreme Court ruled that homosexuals have no rights, at least in Georgia, to make love behind closed doors. At the moment Reagan was conducting his patriotic orgy on Governor's Island, pinning a medal on Henry Kissinger and celebrating Frank Sinatra's moral purity, a mass migration may have been in progress to those states on the East and West coasts that still have statutes protecting homosexual rights (once again the cry is "Wagons Ho!"). As for the newly refurbished Statue of Liberty, she is being elevated less into a symbol of freedom—or even of the open door, since we are tightening immigration policy at the same time that we are exalting immigrant traditions—than of religious iconography: a homegrown American Madonna with a four-and-a-half foot nose. Soon the crippled and the infirm will be rushing to touch her copper hide in search of some miraculous cure.

The theater, being a public art, has always been precariously poised regarding its intrinsic freedoms. Until quite recently, there were moral and sexual constraints. In the 1930s and '40s, the constraints were political; from the '60s on, constraints have come from a variety of pressure points. Muzzling theatrical expression has often been a pastime of groups across the whole ideological spectrum, from extreme right to extreme left. In the most recent flap, a production was excluded from an international festival in Baltimore because of protests from another country. The Theatre of Nations, sponsored by the International Theatre Institute, under the presidency of the Nigerian playwright Wole Soyinka, decided to ask Peter Hall to stage his National Theatre production of George Orwell's *Animal Farm* under private auspices at Baltimore's Mechanic Theatre after representatives of the Soviet Union objected that the work was anti-Soviet.

The fallout from this decision was highly contaminated. Hall cried censorship while Soyinka asserted (having conceded the justice of the Soviet complaints) that his compromise had saved the festival. The resulting acrimony between these two men of the theater was delicious, with Hall accusing Soyinka of "Orwellian double-think" and Soyinka charging that Hall "has behaved so badly . . . he should jump in the lake." But it had a positive result in forcing a re-examination, and new appreciation, of Orwell's prophetic novel. The other positive result was the debate it stimulated over the question of censorship in the theater in response to real or imagined insult.

Soyinka's position, and that of Martha Coigney, vice president of ITI, is that dropping Hall's production from the festival was necessary for the sake of international amity. Mrs. Coigney affirmed that her organization is "guided by the principle of mutual respect of the national traditions of each country," while Soyinka insisted that "compromises are made to save a gathering of different cultures." The fact that the Soviet Union was not represented in this festival was ironic but not considered relevant, since its satellites would have protested too, and boycotted the affair. Hall's position was that contact and understanding between nations is important, "but not at any price." Naturally, everybody in the theater world, including me, had a few words to say to the *New York Times* correspondents who reported the flap, not once but on three separate occasions.

My own position was that nations, like people, communicate with each other best not by suppressing ideas but rather by exchanging them. Civil libertarians know that freedom of expression cannot be limited to those who share your opinions; if not available to all, it is available to none. Soyinka's decision set a dangerous precedent for the future. It made it infinitely harder, for example, to defend a controversial Soviet play—one perhaps with anti-American content—from suppression by elements of the right. Hall was correct to characterize the "solution" proposed by the festival as a benevolent form of censorship. If a professor, dropped from his own university for "dangerous thoughts," is helped to find a post at a college nearby, he is nonetheless a victim of suppression. Hall was enunciating a crucial principle of free expression while ITI was acting on an idea of consensual amity and good fellowship—at the expense of artistic freedom.

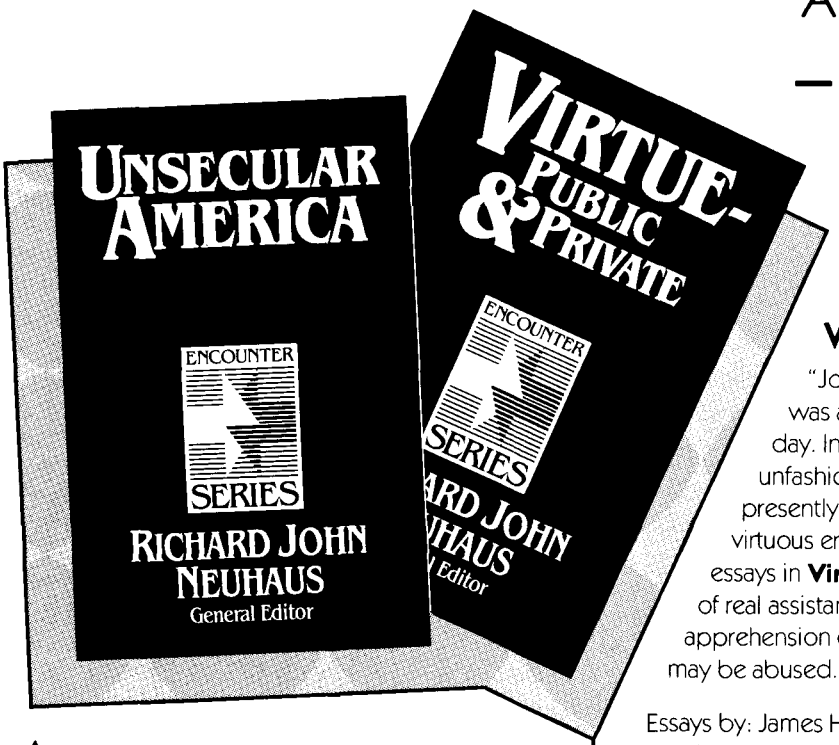
The puzzling thing to me was how many American theater people, most of them liberals, could ignore this principle in the name of international harmony. But this is a good deal less puzzling when one remembers how vulnerable dramatic art has always been to external pressures from special interest



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# "THE ENCOUNTER SERIES will contribute greatly to our understanding of the part that faith plays in the continuing American experiment."

**—GEORGE GALLUP, JR.**




Arising out of the conferences sponsored by the Center on Religion and Society in New York City, the **Encounter Series** presents the dialogue of a diverse group of theologians, ethicists, philosophers, and public policy experts from across the political and religious spectrum. The subjects under discussion are as varied as evangelical political theory, Jews in unsecular America, the renascence of religion in the public arena, church-state conflict, the changing mission of the Black Church, and the idea of virtue in the modern world. Each volume includes not only the essays presented at the conference, but also a lively narrative of the subsequent discussion, which allows the reader to experience more fully the actual give-and-take of genuine dialogue.

**RICHARD JOHN NEUHAUS ▲**
General Editor

ENCOUNTER SERIES

Now Available:

## VIRTUE: PUBLIC AND PRIVATE

"John Adams wrote that 'conscience' was a word long out of fashion in his day. In our time, 'virtue' has been equally unfashionable for some decades. But presently people discover that an unvirtuous era is a vicious era. The intelligent essays in **Virtue: Public and Private** will be of real assistance in restoring among us an apprehension of what virtue is and how the word may be abused."

**—RUSSELL KIRK**

Essays by: James H. Billington ▲ Gilbert Meilaender, ▲ Robert E. Rodes, Jr.; ▲ Bernard Semmel.

Paper, $5.95

## UNSECULAR AMERICA

"A lively collection of writings on a topic of increasing interest to clergy, sociologists and, of course, politicians.

**—THE KIRKUS REVIEWS**

"As **Unsecular America** makes clear, the notion that America is or is rapidly becoming a secular society flies in the face of the evidence. On the other hand, the implications of the perduring and growing force of religion are by no means clear. And that is one reason why, especially now, thoughtful Americans of all religions and none should welcome the appearance of the **Encounter Series.**"

**—PETER BERGER**

Essays by: Paul Johnson ▲ Everett Carll Ladd ▲ George M. Marsden ▲ Richard John Neuhaus

Paper, $8.95

Available in Fall 1986:

## CONFESSION, CONFLICT, AND COMMUNITY

Essays by ▲ Peter L. Berger ▲ Edwin S. Gaustad ▲ Eberhard Müller ▲ Trutz Rendtorff

632

At your bookstore, or write:

**WM. B. EERDMANS PUBLISHING CO.**
255 JEFFERSON AVE. S.E. / GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN 49503

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

groups. Unlike the press, where the First Amendment is jealously guarded as a fundamental right, the American theater has seldom put up a particularly determined fight in defense of its own freedoms. It is virtually impossible to produce Marlowe's *Jew of Malta* these days because of the protest of Jewish groups. Strindberg is rarely staged lest he arouse the ire of feminists. *Huckleberry Finn*, in its various stage adaptations, is still attacked in the mistaken belief that it libels blacks. Christopher Durang's *Sister Mary Explains It All* has fallen victim to conservative Catholic pressures. Almost any powerful dramatic work can be construed—whether correctly or not—as an insult to some sensitive group or individual; but while the rights of peaceful protest must be staunchly protected, so must the rights of the thing being challenged.

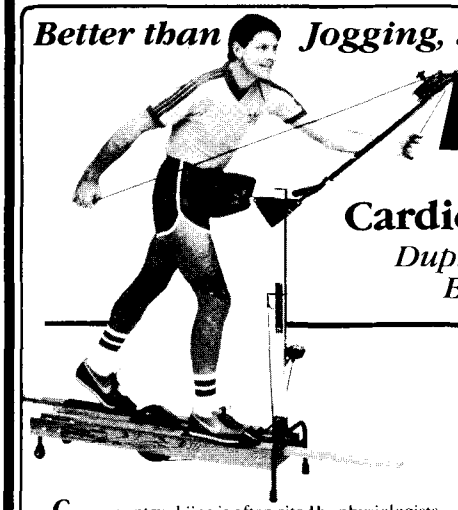
Theater history is a chronicle of riots against plays, the most celebrated being the fracas at the opening of *Playboy of the Western World*. At that time, audiences interrupted the Abbey Theatre performance of Synge's great play, shrewdly perceiving it to be a slander on Ireland, while Yeats stood alone on stage screaming, "You have disgraced yourselves again." Can anyone imagine an American producer today addressing an audience in that manner? Theater people have a notorious need to be liked and a notorious fear of giving offense. They can tolerate, without comment, the most outrageous assaults on their calling—and the most ignorant interpretations of their work—if they come from ethnic, sexual, religious, or racial groups that imagine they've been insulted. But the price we pay for our timidity is a growing fear of risk, if not a growing fear of truth. And in the theater, as elsewhere, only the truth will set us free—"the truth," as Hannah Arendt ruefully added, "which is always awful."

I'm not suggesting that the theater should be deliberately provocative, but if it's not provoking someone then it's probably not doing its job, which is to rearrange consciousness. Constitutional safeguards still allow the arts a wide latitude of expression. What's sometimes missing is the courage to employ those freedoms. The rise of ethnic, sexual, and racial awareness—and the invention of such carelessly strewn epithets as "racist" or "sexist" or "homophobe"—has had the effect of thinning the once-tough American skin almost to the point of invisibility. Obviously, it is necessary to be alert to prejudice, but the result of oversensitivity is that many artists find it virtually impossible to create a work of the imagination without imposing some form of self-censorship. Perhaps that is why contemporary American playwrights prefer to write about family conflict and personal relationships rather than extend into public and potentially controversial subjects. Perhaps that is why, when they touch on social themes, they generally limit themselves to such community-endorsed evils as the villainy of the CIA or the scourge of AIDS while approaching the touchier subjects of race and sex in a consensually approved manner. And perhaps that is why we find the demythologizing satire of Richard Pryor and Howie Mandel so refreshing. Only stand-up comedy today seems brave enough to open up forbidden subjects and expose them to the air through irreverent, uninhibited comment.

As Lenny Bruce once reminded us in a priceless skit, everyone is prejudiced against somebody, but the consequence of denying these feelings publicly is only to send them underground, where they fester and sicken. Genuine racism didn't disappear in America because of legislation or interdiction any more than genuine anti-Semitism disappeared in Germany or Austria after the fall of Hitler. Kurt Waldheim was always there waiting, like a wart, to rise through the transparent skin of religious tolerance. If you push a virulent enemy underground, you can't see him to fight him. And if you succeed in suppressing your enemy, you may also be suppressing a friend.

The Bill of Rights, which incorporates the First Amendment, was an afterthought to the Constitution, largely designed to protect minority rights. And although Americans are very pious regarding freedom of speech as an abstraction, its specific advantages are enjoyed primarily by writers, journalists, radicals, and artists. Freedom of speech often collides with the will of the majority, which is why it is protected in the courts, and why the theater must protect it as well. Henrik Ibsen, who also faced suppression and censorship, knew that freedom was not just a question of voting rights, religious tolerance, or international brotherhood, but something larger


***Better than Jogging, Swimming, or Cycling...***



**NordicTrack**

*Jarless Total Body*

**Cardiovascular Exerciser**

*Duplicates X-C Skiing for the Best Motion in Fitness*

Cross-country skiing is often cited by physiologists as the most perfect form of cardiovascular exercise for both men and women. Its smooth, fluid, total body motion uniformly exercises more muscles so higher heart rates seem easier to attain than when jogging or cycling. NordicTrack closely simulates the pleasant X-C skiing motion and provides the same cardiovascular endurance-building benefits–right in the convenience of your home, year 'round. Eliminates the usual barriers of time, weather, chance of injury, etc. Also highly effective for weight control.

**More Complete Than Running**

NordicTrack gives you a more complete work out–conditions both upper body and lower body muscles at the same time. Fluid, jarless motion does not cause joint or back problems.

**More Effective Than Exercise Bikes**

NordicTrack's stand-up skiing motion more uniformly exercises the large leg muscles and also adds important upper body exercise. Higher pulse rates, necessary for building fitness, seem easier to attain because the work is shared by more muscle mass.

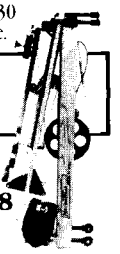
**Even Better Than Swimming**

NordicTrack more effectively exercises the largest muscles in the body, those located in the legs and buttocks. When swimming, the body is supported by the water, thus preventing these muscles from being effectively exercised. The stand up exercising position on the NordicTrack much more effectively exercises these muscles.

**A Proven, High Quality Durable Product**

NordicTrack is in its 7th year of production. NordicTrack is quiet, motorless and has separately adjustable arm and leg resistances. We manufacture and sell direct. Two year warrantee, 30 day trial period with return privilege.

**Folds and stands on end to require only 15" x 17" storage space.**



*Call or write for...*

**FREE BROCHURE**

**Toll Free 1-800-328-5888**

**Minnesota 612-448-6987**

**PSI, 124NR Columbia Crt., Chaska, MN 55318**




LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and more metaphysical: "As to liberty," he wrote to Georg Brandes:

> I shall never agree to making liberty synonymous with political liberty. What you call liberty, I call liberties; and what I call the struggle for liberty is nothing but the steady, vital growth and pursuit of the very conception of liberty. He who possesses liberty as something already achieved possesses it dead and soulless; for the essence of the idea of liberty is that it continue to develop steadily as men pursue it and make it part of their being.

It is these words, and not Emma Lazarus's condescending tribute to "wretched refuse," that should be engraved on the base of the Statue of Liberty, for it is these words that remind us that threats to liberty can lie dormant even in the most benevolent hearts.

What the TV newsmagazines can't tell us.

# THE VIEW FROM THE TUBE

## BY TIMOTHY NOAH

IN 1968 a documentary producer at CBS News had the idea of creating a television show that would resemble *Life* magazine. The result was "60 Minutes," the most popular TV news program in history. Its success transformed the television magazine from a conceit into a familiar journalistic form. Today these "magazines" include, in addition to "60 Minutes," "20/20" on ABC, "1986" on NBC, and "West 57th," a sort of yuppie cousin to "60 Minutes," on CBS. Magazine-style TV journalism has had an influence on the evening news shows, which are running lengthier special segments—especially the recently expanded "MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour." Meanwhile, soft "back-of-the-book" stories have found a home on local "Evening" and "PM" TV magazines.

The magazine approach has proven to be far more commercially successful in television than it ever was in what must now be called "print" magazines. Because they are substantially cheaper to produce than entertainment shows (and, unlike most TV shows, are not the work of independent producers but of in-house network news divisions), even TV magazines with low ratings may make financial sense to network programmers. A top-rated magazine such as "60 Minutes" is a money machine; it's been estimated that "60 Minutes" is responsible for more than half the profits of CBS's broadcast division. Ironically, while the TV magazines thrive, most of the big-circulation general interest magazines that first inspired this trend in TV journalism have long since departed from the scene. *Collier's* folded in 1957, the *Saturday Evening Post* in 1969, *Look* in 1971, and *Life* in 1972, just four years after "60 Minutes" was born. In the days before television, these magazines had been able to sustain enormous circulations because they were the most important medium for national, visually oriented advertising; radio could provide sounds but no headlines or pictures. Then came TV.

In their heyday in the 1940s and '50s, the "slicks" were a mixture of light features, profiles of sports heroes and movie stars, and more ambitious "hard fact" stories that addressed social problems, all generously illustrated (especially in *Life* and *Look*). The formula for the weightier reporting was to provide an accumulation of human detail derived from exhaustive legwork. In a forthcoming volume of memoirs, *It Seems Like Only Yesterday*, the writer John Bartlow Martin describes several such magazine stories that he produced during this period, mostly for the *Saturday Evening Post*. In one, for example, he profiled a 12-year-old Chicago boy found guilty of murdering a seven-year-old playmate and sentenced to 22 years in the penitentiary because Illinois had no reformatory.

The TV magazines learned from the slicks how to tell a story through people. They also learned from the picture magazines how to tell a story through visuals. Today, different magazine shows have tried to challenge, to various degrees, the constraints of print, increasing the emphasis on pictures and personalities and de-emphasizing words and ideas. Indeed, one show that has appeared sporadically on NBC, "Fast Copy," seems premised on the notion that in the video age print is obsolete: articles that one might assume had already reached mass audiences in magazines like *Good Housekeeping* and *TV Guide* are repackaged for TV and introduced by the magazines' editors. (Both the magazine and the author of the original article get paid for this.) Print magazines are far from extinct, but it is arguable that just as TV has replaced magazines as the dominant mass medium for word-and-image advertising, shows such as "60 Minutes" and "20/20" have become the dominant mass medium for magazine-style journalism. Browsing through the electronic coffee table, it's worth considering what's been lost in the process.

The first TV magazine—"60 Minutes"—remains the best. Since the program's ratings took off in the mid-1970s, intellectuals have tended to disdain it, but one suspects the program's most vociferous critics haven't spent much time viewing the alternatives. It is probably the least self-consciously video-minded of all the TV magazines; at a time when TV news programs emphasize flashy computer graphics, "60 Minutes" sticks to its stopwatch logo and black background. Words matter on "60 Minutes." In his book, *Minute by Minute*, Don Hewitt, the show's executive producer (that is, editor in chief), writes: "I am a bug on audio, convinced it is your ear as much as your eye that keeps you glued to a television set."

To a great extent this means fussing over pauses and inflections, but Hewitt's obsession with audio also affects content. The writing on "60 Minutes" is simple and direct, guiding the viewer from idea to image with a minimum of hype. A good example was the "lead" to a story by Morley Safer about the burning of Indian brides whose families can't pay large dowries. Instead of florid denunciations of savagery and horror, Safer began by introducing two Indian feminists. "They are not trying to provide something as luxurious as an equal rights amendment or end harassment in the workplace," he said. "They do not contemplate the sex of God or whether women should be called Miss or Ms.," he continued, with just a hint of weariness. "Their work is more elemental. They are trying to stop this." There fol-

Timothy Noah is a contributing editor of the *Washington Monthly*.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lows a succession of five black-and-white still photos of women who've been burned to death.

"60 Minutes" has a sure instinct for a good story. A 1971 segment revealed that many liberal supporters of busing (Teddy Kennedy, Ben Bradlee, Thurgood Marshall, Tom Wicker) sent their children to private schools. A 1980 segment told the hair-raising story of an insane man who, despite his repeated threats and attempts to kill his ex-wife, was granted a one-day furlough from a mental hospital and carried out the threat. More recently, the focus of the show has been a bit softer, with more celebrity interviews. And the celebrities chosen to be interviewed (Johnny Carson, Jackie Gleason) don't seem quite as tony as those considered profile material in the old days—Leopold Stokowski or Federico Fellini holding forth while the correspondent, perched on the edge of his seat, smiled tightly. (Those high-culture interludes seemed to make Dan Rather especially tense.) Still, "60 Minutes" continues to track down stories that don't make their way into newspaper headlines. Recently, for example, it did a fine piece on preparations in Nicaragua to wage war against American troops.

THE antithesis of "60 Minutes" is CBS's new "West 57th." The program's opening sequence is a gaudy celebration of the joys of video, taking us breathlessly behind the scenes with elaborate crosscutting between correspondents discussing their stories, clips from the stories themselves, and control-room hubbub: "You have to wait for me to get to speed. Give us the top! Give us anything! Give us something!" In addition to fast cutting, "West 57th" keeps the individual stories shorter. "60 Minutes" will present three stories in an hour (plus a mercifully brief humor essay by Andy Rooney). "West 57th" does four or five. Plowing through transcripts of both shows, I found it would take me about 20 minutes to read an episode of "60 Minutes," but I could knock off a "West 57th" in ten. Av Westin, executive producer of ABC's "20/20," explained to me what he saw as the difference between "60 Minutes" and "West 57th": whereas "60 Minutes" squeezes down what would ordinarily be hour-long documentaries into tight 20-minute segments, "West 57th" inflates three-minute stories from the evening news into ten-minute segments.

One reason "West 57th" stories zip along so quickly is that interjections in the form of stand-up or voice-over narration are kept to a minimum. The word-to-picture ratio is heavily weighted toward pictures. The style resembles cinema verité, but paradoxically the result often seems phony. When so much importance is given to getting the story as it happens, the correspondent must struggle not merely to interview but to "interact." When this comes naturally, fine. During a "60 Minutes" interview, Lena Horne, talking with Ed Bradley about her struggle for acceptance in the white world as the two of them strolled through a park, impulsively reached for his hand. Because the gesture was genuine, the footage was touching. But "West 57th" strains for false intimacy. For example, during an apparent lull in a story on Garland Bunting, an old-time liquor control agent on the trail of illegal stills in North Carolina, Meredith Vieira, an attractive and, on the evidence of other segments she's done for the program, intelligent reporter, suddenly and inexplicably started flirting:

> VIEIRA: But Garland, if I were to move to North Carolina and set myself up with a little still, do a little business, would you arrest me?
> BUNTING: I wouldn't have no alternative. You know, I'd arrest my mother if she set one up in here.
> VIEIRA: No, you would not!

The subject matter of "West 57th" reflects a medium-is-the-message philosophy. In its brief life span, the show has already done two stories on music videos and one on the expansion of pornography into the video market. Even a profile of Danny Sullivan, winner of the 1985 Indianapolis 500, focused not on what it's like to be a race car driver (which would have been fun to learn about) but on the endorsement racket. This allowed us to see Sullivan doing several takes of an Alberto VO-5 commercial. "West 57th" has done some serious stories—a piece on the availability of machine guns, for example, and another on Los Angeles's tough enforcement of toxic waste laws—but overall the show leaves an impression that what it is really about is itself.

ABC's "20/20" occupies a middle ground between "60 Minutes" and "West 57th." Its word-to-picture ratio resembles that of "60 Minutes"; reporters are permitted to spend a little time paraphrasing abstract material through narration and stand-ups. This allows "20/20," which usually runs three or fewer pieces per show, to take on ambitious stories. Indeed, "20/20" often outdoes "60 Minutes" in the quality of its investigative reporting. For example, long before the spare parts scandals became page-one news, Geraldo Rivera did a segment on George Spanton, a Pentagon auditor who blew the whistle on Pratt & Whitney, a key spare parts contractor. More recently, Sylvia Chase did an impressively thorough job of exposing how the Mafia was using Midwestern pizza parlors as fronts for selling heroin.

But "20/20," like "West 57th," relies heavily on flash. Much of this is a simple result of network scheduling. While "60 Minutes" airs Sunday at 7 p.m., "West 57th" and "20/20" (and for that matter, NBC's "1986") are in prime-time slots, and Av Westin says the difference is crucial. "60 Minutes" comes on during a time period restricted by the FCC to local programming, with exceptions for network children's shows, documentaries, and public affairs programs. It also airs on the day when people go to church and read the Sunday newspaper. "'60 Minutes' is Sunday, go-to-meetin' absolution," says Westin. "20/20," on the other hand, appears on Thursdays at 10, opposite "Knott's Landing" and "Hill Street Blues." As a result, "what we did to survive was to play for more of the entertainment values. We play more for emotion."

ON "20/20" the glitz is not so much in the visuals as in the words, which are more plentiful than on "West 57th" but less restrained than on "60 Minutes." A substantial portion of the show is devoted to the exchange of gushy happy talk between the show's two very visible anchors, Hugh Downs and Barbara Walters, and also between the anchors and individual correspondents, who are always "debriefed" after their segments. It is not enough that we be moved—as well we should be—by the efforts of New York City ghetto schoolchildren to raise money to transport grain to Ethiopia, the subject of a special hour-long edition in 1985. It is not even enough that we watch the children watch footage of their grain being delivered (another instance of "West 57th"-style video obsession) and learn how moved they are: "It's like, now I know what the real meaning of the word starvation is. You know, you come home from school, you say, 'Mom,



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I'm starving.' Well, we really don't know what it's like to be starving like that." To make absolutely certain that we are all feeling the correct emotions, we must witness this exchange between the correspondent, Tom Jarriel, Downs, and Walters:

> WALTERS: Tom, that was so moving for us here, I can imagine what it was like for you there.
> JARRIEL: Very much so, yes.
> WALTERS: What has happened now? Have the children in New York finished with the situation, or—
> JARRIEL: The momentum of their drive is still going on, Barbara. In fact they've now got a quarter of a million dollars in contributions—they're sending more food and buying two trucks for Ethiopia, which are badly needed.
> WALTERS: Isn't that wonderful.
> DOWNS: That's just marvelous.

"20/20" could use a bit more restraint in its story selection as well. The problem isn't so much in the stories "20/20" does as in those it chooses to dwell on. A segment on New York City schoolchildren raising money to buy grain for Ethiopia is fine, but a whole hour? (An hour about what caused the mass starvation to begin with and why government relief efforts have failed would seem more worthwhile.) "20/20" did not one but two stories on the McMartin Preschool child abuse case, God's gift to the TV magazine shows (NBC's "American Almanac" also weighed in). The second story served as the occasion to present lurid testimony from James Rowe, a former prisoner of war, to demonstrate that scare tactics allegedly employed by McMartin teachers—for example, slaughtering pet turtles and rabbits—were "curiously parallel to the classic brainwashing techniques used on prisoners of war."

OF ALL three networks, NBC has had the most difficult time with the magazine form. Fourteen NBC magazine shows have come and gone since "60 Minutes" first appeared. The most recent attempt, "American Almanac," was pulled off the air this past winter and reconstituted with "West 57th"-style New Wave graphics and a few staff changes as "1986," which had its debut in June. "American Almanac" was intended to be calmer and more in touch with ordinary people's lives than the other magazine shows. "Lush photography, and a feeling of quiet and sort of stateliness" is how Roger Mudd described the idea to Mary Battiata of the *Washington Post*. "Most of our television and most of our news moves too fast, and you're forcefed so much information that your system can't digest it, and I thought that there should be some space, once a week . . . for things to slow down, so people could be a little more contemplative." An obvious influence was "Sunday Morning" and its host, Charles Kuralt, who projects intelligence and an unforced affection for Americana derived from years of traveling across the country for his evening news "On the Road" stories. But the down-home format of "American Almanac" proved unconvincing. On the first program, Mudd announced, "We'd like this to be the sort of show you might hang on a nail by the kitchen door, if that were possible." At the end of the show, Mudd bid viewers farewell, "Until the next phase of the moon." At the end of another, he signed off by observing that 150 years ago that day, "John and Jane Clemens, residing in Florida, Missouri, had a son. Called him Samuel." There aren't many people who can pull this sort of thing off.

THE COMPARATIVE merits of print versus TV journalism are a reflection of the comparative strengths, and weaknesses, of pictures versus words. In certain ways, pictures are more honest. Consider the practice on some TV magazines of staking out the home or office of a guilty party who has refused an interview. When he shows up, you get some nice jerky footage of him mumbling "no comment" before he cups his hand over the lens. This is called "ambush journalism," and it is many critics' main complaint about the TV magazines. But print journalists perform invisible ambushes all the time. Not many reporters make a point of identifying themselves to everyone they observe in the course of writing a story. And a surprising number make a habit of secretly recording phone interviews, a far more ethically questionable practice than TV ambushes.

Respectable brows also furrow over the various ways TV news distorts the truth. Quotations are taken out of context. Tight close-ups make bad guys look guilty. Interrogators get to reshoot questions while interviewees have to stand by what they said, unless they're the good guys, in which case they get coached. Certainly there are abuses. In a libel suit filed by Dr. Carl Galloway against "60 Minutes," a review of the outtakes revealed that one interviewee's


**Call for any current book**

- Amex, MasterCard, Visa or check.
- We ship immediately, anywhere in the world. ● Gift wrapping available.
- Mail orders welcome.

**1-800-255-2665**
In CT or Worldwide (203) 966-5470
59 Elm Street, New Canaan, CT 06840

**LITERATE T-SHIRTS!**
Shakespeare, Virginia Woolf, Sartre, Thoreau, Cheshire Cat, White Rabbit, Beethoven, Freud, Austen, Sherlock Holmes, Tolkien, Poe, Twain, Nietzsche, Bach, Rasputin, Gandhi, Kerouac, Van Gogh, Da Vinci, Robert E. Lee, others.
**Sizes S, M, L, XL. T-shirt:** (white, lt blue, or red) $10.50. 4/$38. **Sweatshirt** (grey) $19. 2/$36. **Ship:** $1 per piece.
**Illus. brochure** 75¢
**Historical Products, Box 220 CP Cambridge, MA 02238**

Euthanasia
**Let Me Die Before I Wake**
by Derek Humphry
Practical advice to the dying about accelerating the end.
In bookstores/$10.
$6 plus $1.50 shipping when ordered from
**The Hemlock Society**
**POB 66218 L.A.CA 90066**

**SCHOLARSHIPS. LOANS. GRANTS & FELLOWSHIPS.**
For more information, write to:
SCHOLARSHIP RESEARCH SERVICE
1602 BERGEN STREET
BROOKLYN,
NEW YORK 11240-00521

"POOR LIBERALS! They've barely got used to saying 'Reagan Administration,' and now they have to live with 'Rehnquist Court.'"

For a free copy of the current issue of National Review write to Dept. R-13. 150 East 35th Street. New York, N.Y. 10016.




LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

one-word answer, "yes," had not been given to the question that appeared immediately before it in the broadcast. (In his book *60 Minutes: The Power and the Politics of America's Most Popular TV News Show*, Axel Madsen speculates that the answer came in response to a crew member offering a cup of coffee.) On the whole, though, TV news is much more constraining to would-be falsifiers than print. "You print guys make things up all the time," Don Hewitt told me when I interviewed him in his cluttered office at CBS. In *It Seems Like Only Yesterday*, John Bartlow Martin confesses that in the first magazine article he ever sold, written in 1938 about the Dominican Republic under Trujillo, he invented an anecdote about a girl getting raped by a soldier. "I never again invented an episode in a serious magazine piece, for it is a shabby trick, a counterfeit substitute for solid reporting," Martin writes. Do you find yourself wondering what he meant by that qualifier, "serious"?

Outright fabrication or harder to detect phony "blind quotes" from anonymous sources or composites are impossible on TV. Janet Cooke could never have reported "Jimmy's World" for "60 Minutes." As Jeff Greenfield pointed out in a special navel-contemplation edition of "60 Minutes" in 1981: "One thing you don't do with television cameras is find a nonexistent eight-year-old child on heroin. You can't, unless you hired Gary Coleman." To demonstrate how much easier it is to lie in print than with pictures, I invented that quotation from Don Hewitt in the previous paragraph. That interview never took place. I'm only guessing that his office is "cluttered." Everything else in this story is true, but you're going to have to take my word for it.

THE POINT is that television is more reliably stenographic than print. Unfortunately, the dictation is performed by big, clumsy machinery—what TV people call the "thousand-pound pencil." The machinery records the truth, but the truth that is there to record can't help but be altered by the camera's conspicuousness. Take ambush journalism. A more practical criticism is that, precisely because the camera is so obtrusive, the attempt to take a victim by surprise may backfire. On "West 57th," Meredith Viand Garland Bunting, the North Carolina revenuer, ambushed a liquor still out in the woods. There was some great footage of Bunting sneaking through the woods and whispering to his men: "Y'all hold up right here [crinkle, crinkle]. Stay right here [crinkle]. Hold it, hold it." On the voice-over, Vieira noted the danger of this operation. But when they arrived at the still, the bootleggers were long gone. Do you suppose it had something to do with the fact that Bunting had a camera crew in tow?

The same problem comes up when TV reporters go undercover to do a story. "1986" used this technique in a story about Florida's porous borders. "These three men could have been dropped by a Cuban or Soviet trawler," narrated Peter Kent over a picture of a speedboat racing through the Caribbean in broad daylight. In fact, they were hired by NBC to show how easy it is to slip past the Coast Guard. The boat did evade the authorities, but Kent had to concede, "Perhaps with our camera boat and the helicopter, we weren't suspicious enough." Perhaps?

A more subtle effect created by the presence of a TV camera is its tendency to change the way people talk when one is pointed at them. Active "coaching" by a correspondent or segment producer to say this or that may occur now and then, but the more common problem is the way questions are formulated to nudge the interviewee in the direction of *clichés*. On a "1986" segment about the physical abuse of teenagers who sign up with shady companies to travel around the country and sell door-to-door, Ed Rabel asked one teenager who had been badly beaten, "Now you had a dream when you joined this organization. What did you come away with?" The answer came right on cue: "A shattered dream." People don't talk like this in real life. But they do when they're on television. Television doesn't seem to mind. It is more important that an interviewee say something that helps tell the story, just as it is better to have footage of Garland Bunting sneaking through the woods or an NBC speedboat zooming into Florida, even when there's no payoff. The alternative is no sound bite and no action footage.

IF TV magazines change the truth and get stuck with the consequences, there is also a large slice of the truth that they don't get at all. Print magazines are distinguished from newspapers in part by their ability to explore things from an analytic point of view. This can be as simple as paraphrasing what someone says rather than using a quotation or, one step up the ladder of abstraction, generalizing on the basis of what several people say or, one step further still, interpreting conflicting accounts to arrive at the truth. Each step carries you closer to the kind of subjective truth that TV is ill equipped to perceive or communicate. Part of the problem is organizational: TV news is collaborative. A story is the work not just of the correspondent but of the field producer (who usually puts in more time on the story than the correspondent himself), the researcher, and the cameraman, among others. ("60 Minutes," for example, has also used the Center for Investigative Reporting in Washington and the Better Government Association in Chicago to develop stories.) Obviously, a committee is not going to produce journalism that reflects idiosyncratic judgment.

Even if it could, it probably wouldn't want to, because to do so would require having someone look into a camera and talk at greater length than most people would care to listen. The introduction of computer graphics has made it easier for TV to deal with a certain kind of abstraction—economic statistics, for example. But less quantifiable ideas remain too elusive for the medium. Even the most word-oriented TV magazine, "60 Minutes," misses out on an important part of the story. Let me give an example I happen to be familiar with. About a year ago, I wrote a story for this magazine about a school for mercenaries in Alabama. "60 Minutes" soon followed up with a story of its own. I assume we both got interested for the same reason: the school had trained four Sikhs implicated in the bombing of an Air India flight.

THE STRENGTH of the "60 Minutes" segment was that it did what no print journalist can ever do: it took you right there, down to Hueytown, Alabama, and let you watch the proprietor, Frank Camper, fire off his automatic weapons in the woods and lead his recruits in a chant of "Vive la mort / Vive la guerre / Vive le sacre mercenaire" at the initiation ceremony at the local Shoney's. Describing these things really can't match seeing them. But seeing Camper's school only gets you half the story—the less important half. Most people would want to know why a school suspected of training terrorists would be permitted to stay open. The answer, unfortunately, can't be photographed. You have to know that Ala-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bama permits private citizens to own automatic weapons, which are not closely regulated by the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, and that semiautomatic weapons aren't regulated at all. You also have to know that the State Department has a hard time proving a violation of the Neutrality Act, which forbids American citizens to raise armies against nations with which the United States is at peace. There is also the issue of free speech: arguably Camper is well within his rights to tell anyone he likes how to go about killing somebody, provided he doesn't tell them to go kill *that* person. "60 Minutes" didn't provide these explanations, with the result that viewers were left with a vague sense that the system wasn't working and with no understanding of why, or how it could be made to work better—by banning machine guns, for example.

As I watched other segments of "60 Minutes," "West 57th," and "1986," it occurred to me over and over that the "why" was consistently missing from the story. "1986," for example, did a story showing that light trucks do not have the same reinforcement bar in their side doors that automobiles do. As a result, they are more dangerous. Why won't the Department of Transportation do anything about this? Connie Chung's answer? "Elizabeth Dole refused our repeated requests for an interview." But what has she said elsewhere? What do others in the department—those not likely to go on record—think? Without answers to these questions, a story that is really about a troubling breakdown in the regulatory process is reduced to "Don't Buy These Trucks, They'll Kill You."

When a viewer sees that people are getting killed in trucks, he is going to get angry. He pays taxes to prevent such things from happening. Why do they happen? How can he help prevent them from happening next time? TV news magazines are ill suited to providing the answers, because the answers are not pictures but words. If pictures point to an answer at all, it is a self-serving one: rely on us to alert you to the hidden dangers and the human tragedies that happen when the system breaks down and you can avoid the troubles suffered by unluckier victims. Instead of learning why his government has failed him and others, and how it can be made to work better, the viewer can lean back in his easy chair and say, Thank God for Ca-Chung, and Mike Wallace, and Hugh Downs, and Roger Mudd. Without these fearless ombudsmen, where would I be?

# KING OF THE RADIO

## Murrow: His Life and Times by A. M. Sperber

(Freundlich Books, 795 pp., $22.95)

"I've always been on the side of the heretics against those who burned them because the heretics so often proved right in the long run. Dead—but right!" This is the claim Ed Murrow made for himself when he gave his famous angry speech of 1958, delivered as he moved toward his break with CBS television. They are ringing words, placed prominently at the beginning of this biography, and are too easily taken as the text that captures the essence of the man. If one looks at his life, they are insupportable.

News to Murrow was politics, and in politics he was anything but a heretic. His career as a broadcast journalist began in 1936, in the first term of Franklin D. Roosevelt, and ended with the election of John F. Kennedy. It therefore spanned almost the entire mid-century reign of New Deal-Second World War-Fair Deal-Cold War-New Frontier liberalism. Throughout those years Murrow was the unquestioning voice of that orthodoxy. He transmitted it to the public. He uttered no heresy against it; there was no need to burn him at the stake. On the contrary, it was almost inevitable that Murrow's career ended, thanks to an invitation from Kennedy, with him at the helm of the U.S. Information Agency—the voice to the world of the orthodoxy.

This essential fact of Murrow's political conformity is consistently overlooked by those who, both during his life and since then, have elevated him to the status of a media icon. In her vast book, A. M. Sperber tries to make the most of Murrow's occasional misgivings about the orthodoxy, but they were few and far between. "Within the cold war consensus," she says, "he was considered a moderate." But the consensus on the whole was marked by moderation—a consensus by its nature is likely to be moderate—so that only places Murrow in the midstream of the prevailing wisdom. There were heretics in that time, of course, to the left and to the right, but Murrow was never on their side. He seems never to have been interested in or curious about the left, but the most important heretics during this liberal reign were conservatives, and Murrow lost few chances to pick them to pieces.

Robert Taft was clearly a heretic, and a very thoughtful one, consistently opposing the New Deal-welfare state and cold war consensus, and Murrow deliberately set out to savage him in his campaign for the presidential nomination in 1952. He then took pleasure in Taft's discomfiture. After mocking Taft's campaign on his program, "See It Now," Murrow switched live to the candidate, who had been watching it at home, and of course the camera caught Taft with a bleak smile. In fact Murrow had been watching Taft's reactions on the monitor throughout the savaging, and he said to a BBC reporter after the program, "Brother, you saw nothing. I was watching Taft on my monitor when he was watching the film. You should have seen him then." Yet Taft was a deeply sincere heretic—and it was Murrow who was burning him. In a much vaunted program in 1956, Murrow vehemently denounced Joe McCarthy, another heretic. Of course Murrow was right to attack him, but it's worth noticing that he did so only when McCarthy had already weakened himself by accusing such orthodox institutions as the "establishment clergy" (Sperber's phrase), the CIA, the U.S. Army, and finally the Senate itself of treason.

POLITICALLY Murrow was always on the safe ground of the ruling orthodoxy of the day. His political views are therefore of little interest, yet the bulk of this huge volume is devoted to recording his responses to the political issues of the time, with the unfortunate result that Sperber almost buries the fascinating story of Murrow's attitude to and difficulties with his own profession.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Murrow was present at the creation of two dynamic new media, radio and television. He entered radio when it was still young and television when it was in its infancy, and he was a dominating figure in the news programs of both. He was a master of the medium of radio; he discovered he could only be a pawn in the enterprise of television. There is the real story and the illumination for us. There even is the tragedy of his life. This is what Sperber buries under the pile of unsifted research she gives us.

THE CRUCIAL fact about American television news is that it was established as a new medium by newsmen who came from radio, and of course from newspapers and news agencies (especially UPI)—not only Murrow, but Eric Sevareid, Howard K. Smith, Harry Reasoner, Walter Cronkite, Charles Collingwood, David Brinkley, and others. They came from radio, moreover, when it was powerful, enterprising, and innovative, or in Murrow's own words near the end of his broadcasting career, "proud, alert and fast." (It is interesting to note that this angry speech in 1958, denouncing the CBS executives, was primarily an attack on what they had done to radio news, in which he'd been involved since 1936, even though he had already committed himself to television.) These pioneers of television were used to telling the news in words, and in particular to using words to create pictures.

Murrow excelled at this form, and the real drama in his life lies not in the great events he reported, or even in the culminating break with CBS, but in his switch from radio to television. It is at exactly that point, when television began to overtake radio, that the nature and meaning of Murrow's work and life (the two are almost indistinguishable) are revealed, and so also the nature and meaning of television's influence as the transmitter of news to the widest audience.

The vividness of some radio reporting was remarkable, and a classic example was Murrow's reporting from London during the Battle of Britain and the blitz, the achievement for which he is now best remembered. One can meet young people today who know hardly anything else about him, but at the mention of his name will recite the famous opening words, "Hello America, this is London calling." That greeting, almost a signature, introduced day after day, night after night, under grueling conditions, some of the finest reporting in any medium.

It is worth looking at the power of radio as revealed in Murrow's reports, because those reports shed light on television's attempt to do the same thing differently, and with such diminished results. There were two main dramas in the story of the blitz. The world was watching to see whether Hitler would bomb the British into submission. Perhaps the majority of Americans at the time, including many in high places, thought he would—which reinforced their isolationism and even defeatism. Murrow stood with the correct liberal-FDR orthodoxy—that Hitler, though 3,000 miles away, was a threat to America's own freedom—and it was the clear purpose of his reporting, as it had also been before the war, to wake up Americans to the danger of what was happening in Europe, and then to try to show them that there were good grounds, not merely wishful thinking, for believing that Britain would not submit. Many people could and did sit in the House of Commons listening to Churchill's first speech as prime minister—"we shall fight on the beaches, in the fields, in the streets and in the hills; we shall never surrender"—and think it was only bravado. It took a very good reporter, especially given the fact that he was an American, to realize at once that the speech meant much more. As Sperber puts it, Murrow "caught the sense of something . . . a possible turning point." He said in his report that night that Churchill's speech had a prophetic quality. So did his own reporting of the speech.

BUT THAT was only part of it. The second drama lay in the grit of the people in London and other large, densely populated cities; in the way they kept their nerve and their humor under almost nightly bombardment. It was from watching these ordinary people that Murrow really became convinced that Britain would not be defeated—and how he watched and talked to them. He was out on the streets night after night in the middle of the raids; the BBC (where CBS had its office) called him their man on the streets, their "messenger from hell." In the streets or from rooftops, as the bombs fell around him, often dangerously close, he kept his eye on the ordinary people he believed held the answer. Three thousand miles away, through his microphone, the American people could hear the sirens wail, the bombs explode, and the anti-aircraft guns roar, but otherwise the picture had to be painted for them by Murrow's words.

"There are no words to describe the thing that is happening," he said in one report. On another occasion, "These things must be seen." Yet he found the words to describe and make the things visible. Just a few fragments will illustrate what he accomplished, and reading them one can almost hear the voice—hear that the words were spoken. Standing on the White Cliffs of Dover while the Battle of Britain raged in the sky above him:

> There is something unreal about this air war. Much of it you can't see. . . . Even when the Germans come down to dive-bomb. . . . You just see a bomber slanting down toward his target; three or four little things that look like marbles fall out. . . . It seems to take a long time for those bombs to hit the ground.

In Trafalgar Square at night during a raid: "The noise that you hear at this moment is the sound of the air-raid siren. . . . People are walking along very quietly. We're just at the entrance of an air-raid shelter here, and I must move the cable over just a bit, so people can walk in." He crouched down on the sidewalk to pick up the sounds of the people walking without panic to the shelter, their footsteps audible, their bodies invisible in the unlit streets and murk. They were "like ghosts shod with steel shoes."

In another raid:

> A row of automobiles, with stretchers racked on the roofs like skis, standing outside of bombed buildings. A man pinned under wreckage where a broken gas main sears his arms and face . . . the courage of the people; the flash and roar of the guns rolling down streets . . . the stench of air-raid shelters in the poor districts.

Driving at midday through emptied village streets in the south of England after an air-raid warning: "the population taking cover, the air quiet and heavy, as though before a thunderstorm." And always the people, bombed out of their homes:

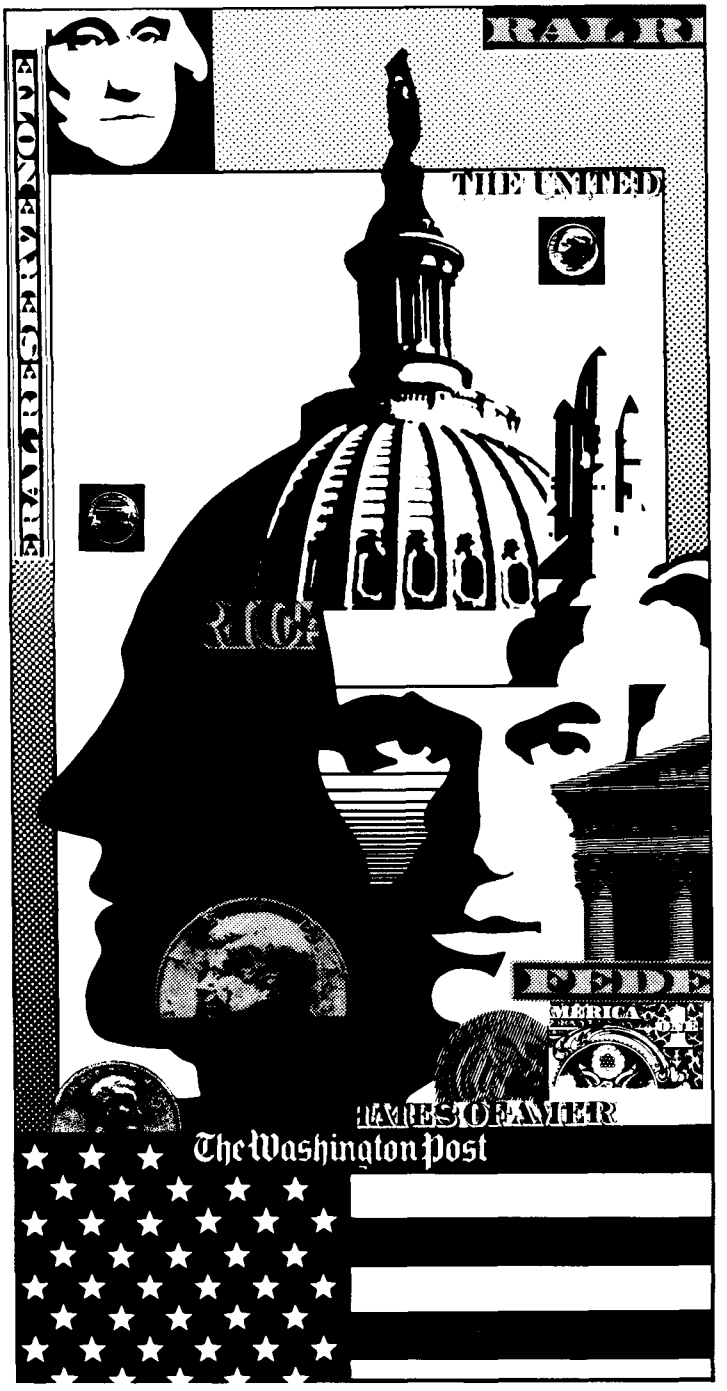
> Men with white scarves around their necks instead of collars . . . dull-eyed empty-faced women. . . . Most of them carried little cheap cardboard suitcases and sometimes bulging paper shopping bags. That was all they had left. . . . I've seen some horrible sights in this city . . . but not once have I heard man, woman or child suggest that Britain should throw in her hand.

As a schoolboy in London throughout the blitz, often firewatching on roofs or



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# FOLLOW THE LEADERS




THE WASHINGTON POST has long been indispensable reading in the White House. It is by far the best read publication in the Congress.

Now our NATIONAL WEEKLY EDITION has become required reading for those across the country who care about the American agenda.

It's no secret why. Democracy is our chief local industry. We devote more time and talent than any other publication to following the nation's leaders. Closely.

Small wonder that you can find THE WASHINGTON POST NATIONAL WEEKLY in governors' offices and university offices, in board rooms and news rooms, in legislative chambers and financial chambers.

We not only follow the leaders. The leaders follow us. Closely.

Shouldn't you?

NATIONAL WEEKLY EDITION

The Washington Post

---

MAIL TO: The Washington Post National Weekly, P.O. Box 925, Farmingdale, N.Y. 11737

Please enter my 52-week subscription to The Washington Post National Weekly Edition for $39.00—a 50% savings off the newsstand price.

☐Payment Enclosed ☐Bill Me

Check one to charge your remittance:

☐MasterCard ☐VISA ☐American Express

Your credit card number (All digits please)

Credit card valid thru

Mo. Yr.

Bank number (4 digits above your name—MasterCard only)

Please enter my charge in the amount of $39.00

Name

Address Apt.

City State Zip

Signature

Offer good only in the U.S. and its possessions. Please allow 4 to 6 weeks for shipment of your first issue.

76T007

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

patrolling the streets during a raid, or sleeping under the kitchen table at home when a bomb landed in our front yard (that's being woken up with a jolt), I can say only that I know no other writing, no pictures, no newsreels, that recall the bombing and the mood of the people more vividly and accurately than Murrow's reporting—and throughout he was making four or five broadcasts a night to America.

THIS wonderfully gifted reporting, by word alone, was sustained after the war from desolate Europe, then threatened by Soviet Russia. But at that very moment, of course, television was being released upon an unsuspecting United States. So in November 1951 Murrow went before the cameras to begin what would now be called a newsmagazine program, "See It Now." There the trouble started, and there it was to end dismally nine years later. No one saw more clearly the limitations of television, compared with the freedom of radio and the word. No one was more sensitive to the fact that with the booming postwar economy and the growth of the "affluent society" television news (and radio news) would be regarded by the corporate executives as a salable commodity. No one imagined with more premonition of disaster what lay ahead, and then went forward to meet it.

For nine years he stuck there, increasingly miserable, tense, insomniac, and desperate. When he went back to America, to CBS headquarters, and to the prison of television, he tried to tempt his friend and colleague William Shirer to join him. Shirer (another very good radio reporter) refused, and in refusing he said to Murrow, "You're much too good to be a company man." Murrow went ahead, acting on what one can only regard as the same self-destructive impulse that made him smoke 90 cigarettes a day (and so die wretchedly and painfully of lung cancer at 54). Here, in the open-eyed choice to abandon not only what he was good at but what he so clearly loved—his own mastery of the spoken word, which he (like Shirer) could well have turned into productive print journalism and books—lies the decisive turning point in his life, which is buried in this book.

Why did he do it? Why did this intelligent, gifted, serious, and dedicated man walk straight into the noose of network television news? For there is no doubt he knew what he was doing. Sperber says he "hated everything about television" from the start, and she writes of the discomfort and inconvenience—torture is perhaps more like it—of the then primitive television technology. Having done it myself in those years, I can all too easily remember the cumbersome cameras and audio equipment, and above all the heat generated by the huge lights—far more of a hell than today's television studios. But in fact Murrow's deeper reservations began before he ever went before the cameras. It is startling to find that in 1949, when television was obviously overtaking radio, he sketched out an article for the *Atlantic Monthly* (which he never wrote), in which he devastatingly pointed out every weakness of television that we can now see every night:

> This is a visual medium . . . where editorial judgment has been largely pictorial. . . . Problem of mobility . . . editorial control . . . who decides . . . need for marriage between newsman and director . . . editorializing by pictorial selection. What lends [it]self to pictorial treatment when most news is made up of what happens in mens [sic] minds as reflected in what comes out of their mouths. And how do you put that in pictures? . . . Need for television to recognize limitation of medium . . . danger of ad lib camera . . . need for sifting and sorting through mind to avert distortion . . . need to argue this out before patterns become set and we all begin to see pictures of our country and the world that just aren't true.

Much has been written about the nature of television news, very little if anything that is better.

ONE CAN hazard guesses about the defects of character that lurked behind Murrow's ill-fated move. Pure self-destruction is too simple. The vanity of dress and manner that this poor boy from a poor family exhibited from the time he went to college was clearly important. False modesty is a mark of vanity, and there is a wonderful story (not in this book) of Moshe Dayan congratulating him, one by one, on three programs he had done; each time Murrow gave the credit to the producer or director, until Dayan said, "You're not all that good." Even the fact that Murrow told that story against himself reveals something of the man—a basic and truthful lack of confidence in the very celebrity he sought, at the price of abandoning his powerful gifts as a reporter using words and not pictures.

His long, drawn-out break with CBS is a story that has often been told, and Sperber for all her research adds little to it. But behind the familiar conflict that led to Murrow's break with CBS—which was clearly wearing for everyone concerned, not only for Murrow—lay much more than the conventional tale of the good boy struggling against the corporate ogres. And Murrow knew it—it was in those notes for the article he could not bring himself to write. It was a struggle between the truth of conscientious words and the capacity of pictures to lie. Murrow knew what he was deserting—the realm of words; the executives knew what they were defending—the realm of filmed pictures. Obscured in Sperber's book is this classic confrontation. As perhaps the greatest of radio journalists, Murrow saw television as radio plus pictures, even though he glibly denied that, while the executives saw it as only pretty (or ugly) pictures—the salable commodity, as in the commercials.

BUT LOOK AT the commercials—the best things on television, as is often said. Brilliant though the camera work is, it is still the words that sell; those Madison Avenue copywriters do not toil for nothing. The most memorable remark of the 1984 election—"Where's the beef?"—came out of a commercial, and the words in the commercial. What Sperber does not do, for all her wordiness, is recognize in Murrow's break with CBS, and in himself, the conflict that is at the center of the media culture of this century. It is a story of the collapse of words, and then the struggle of words to re-establish their eminence. Whether the issue is how to report terrorism, or how to bring back some basic standards of literacy to the public schools, the argument is about the place of words. Murrow's life (as recorded in this book) virtually begins with his instinctive revulsion to the Nuremberg Rally, an event that lives on in our cultural memory because it was the first major occasion on which someone—Hitler—showed and used the power of filmed pictures. The value of democracy is that it values the truth of words, things one cannot mismanage well, unless one has no conscience. Murrow knew this, and that is why his career and life are interesting. So did his opponents.

It is worth going back to his reporting from the blitz. This guy saw things the camera cannot see. To say that stretchers were racked like skis on the



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

roofs of automobiles adds to any pictures, still or filmed, of the same scene. It tells us, for one thing, that these were not ambulances (which were overworked throughout the blitz) but the cars of volunteer citizens, who were precisely the people Murrow saw would pull Britain through—more even than Churchill.

In its great days, *Life*—and its different but almost as good imitator in Britain, *Picture Post*—depended primarily on brilliant (and edited) still photography; but that is only half the truth. The text that went with the pictures always added to them, even if it was only a two-line caption, like Murrow's observation of the stretchers looking like skis. No camera could tell us that. Reflecting on Murrow's accomplishments in radio, and his career after that, tells us more about why television continually seems so inept at recording the real meaning and depth of any event than reams of media criticism can. Murrow recognized the power of words—and anticipated their peril—perhaps better than most of us, and Murrow ignored what he saw.

HENRY FAIRLIE

# LITERATURE AND LIBERATION

## Going to the Territory by Ralph Ellison

(Random House, 338 pp., $19.95)

When Ralph Waldo Ellison was a child, visitors to his house sometimes teased him by pronouncing his name Ralph Waldo Emerson. "No, *no*," he would shout, "*I'm* not Emerson. He's the little boy who lives next door."

Nineteenth-century Concord seems a long way from the black neighborhoods of Oklahoma City where Ellison grew up in the 1920s, but Ellison has always, as a novelist and essayist, asked his readers to hold in their minds a picture of American culture in which those places are next door. The lines of filiation do reach that far, he claims; and what is more, they run both ways. It is not only that to understand Ellison we need to know Emerson. We cannot really understand Emerson without knowing something about the ancestors of the other Ralph.

There may be societies in which this sort of imaginative exercise comes naturally, but America has never been one of them. "Out of many one"—but in cultural matters most people have an easier time with the many than the one. The progressive's idealization of America based on a vision of self-subsistent subcultures cohabiting in Platonic bliss is as much at odds with Ellison's picture as the reactionary's idealization based on a myth of ethnic purity. Ellison's answer to these competing accounts is that his is not a dream of what American culture might be or ought to be; it is a description of what, whether we like it or not, American culture is.

Ellison's own cultural standing is not a simple one. *Invisible Man* was an immediate classic; it has enjoyed canonical status virtually since it appeared in 1952. Its author has therefore been for many years a man with access to powerful cultural institutions; he has been a member of the National Council on the Arts and Humanities and the Carnegie Commission on Public Television, and a trustee of the Kennedy Center; he has testified before congressional committees and lectured at the Library of Congress; he has held chairs at the University of Chicago and NYU. And he has consistently used that access to insist on recognition of the contribution of American blacks to the integrity of American culture. But, inevitably, the very celebrity that makes him heard on behalf of the culturally neglected has made him seem to some an apologist for the cultural establishment. A spirit of ethnic separatism has always been a part of black American life, and because he has chosen to identify with the American tradition in its broadest sense, Ellison has put himself in the difficult position of defending black American culture in the name of what many blacks look upon as an oppressive mainstream culture.

This predicament is not unique in black American literary life—James Baldwin has confronted similar difficulties in his career—and Ellison's view of a culture integrated in spite of itself has been paralleled by a significant line of literary criticism. Arthur P. Davis and Sterling Brown in the 1940s and '50s, Albert Murray in the '60s, Robert Stepto and Henry Louis Gates in the '70s, and most recently Werner Sollors at Harvard have all taken the position that literature by blacks is best understood as part of the literature of the Western tradition—a tradition that is itself neither black nor white but, to use a phrase of Ellison's, "a culture of cultures."

In spite of these allies, Ellison has in many respects adopted the persona of a solitary man—most conspicuously by the exercise of a severe economy of publication. The second novel is famously slow in arriving, and Ellison has, in 34 years in the spotlight of *Invisible Man*, published only two other books: *Shadow and Act* (1964) and now *Going to the Territory*, both collections of occasional pieces—essays, reviews, lectures, interviews. He is the most prominent of living black American writers, and the father of contemporary black American fiction; but he also has seemed, in the long period between novels, an austere and private figure. It is as though he wished to show us that choosing to keep the largest possible company means that one sometimes has to feel oneself almost alone. And he has always seemed as quick to find reasons to differentiate himself from his peers as to find grounds for declaring a common cause.

So that when Richard Wright, in 1940, wrote of the protagonist of his famous novel that "the civilization which had given birth to Bigger had created no culture which could hold and claim his allegiance and faith, had sensitized him and had left him stranded, a free agent to roam the streets of our cities," Ellison suspected his friend and literary mentor of something like bad faith. His counterargument reduces to a single sentence: "Wright could imagine Bigger," is the way he put it in 1963, "but Bigger could not possibly imagine Richard Wright."

*Going to the Territory* is filled with the stories of men and women who personify the kind of cultural mobility Ellison takes to be definitive of the American experience—a kind of mobility unknown to the world of *Native Son*. Among the book's heroes are Duke Ellington, whose music moves one, says Ellison, "to wonder at the mysterious,



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

unanalyzed character of the Negro American—and at the white American's inescapable Negro-ness"; Romare Bearden, who is admired for discovering a method of painting that allowed him "to express the tragic predicament of his people without violating his passionate dedication to art as a fundamental and transcendent agency for confronting and revealing the world"; Inman Page, the first black to graduate from Brown and the principal of Ellison's segregated high school in Oklahoma City, who carried the culture of the Ivy League to the frontier; a music teacher—Hazel Harrison—at Tuskegee Institute in the 1930s who kept a signed Prokofiev manuscript on the lid of her piano; a black custodian with the extraordinary name of Jefferson Davis Randolph, at the Oklahoma State Law Library, whose advice white legislators sought out when they needed information on some point of law; and Richard Wright himself, who is celebrated in a short memorial sketch.

And there is a large cast of anonymous characters: the slaves who imitated and transformed the European dance steps they saw being performed through the plantation house window; the black workingmen who became sophisticated critics of grand opera by moonlighting as spear carriers at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York; middle-class white kids who try to sound like a Baptist choir; even "the white youngster who, with a transistor radio, screaming a Stevie Wonder tune, glued to his ear, shouts racial epithets at black youngsters trying to swim at a public beach." But the chief figure in these essays, as it is in virtually everything Ellison has written since *Invisible Man*, is the young man who began his literary education at an all-black college in Alabama by looking up the books listed in the footnotes to *The Waste Land* and who eventually became the author of a best-selling novel—the figure of Ralph Ellison himself.

It is difficult to think of another writer—Wordsworth is the sort of person who comes to mind—who makes his own experience the touchstone for everything in as explicit and consistent a fashion as Ellison does. He regards the details of his own life—details that might seem to others exceptional or fortuitous—as emblems of general significance. He has transformed his biography, through many retellings, into a kind of parable of cultural possibility. The parable is offered in all humility, for it is Ellison's great virtue that he is unable to imagine that other people might be less capable of achievement than himself. Some virtues have a way of turning into handicaps, though, and it is also possible to feel that an inability to imagine lives more severely deprived of opportunity and determination can be Ellison's most serious shortcoming.

The Oklahoma in which Ralph Ellison was born in 1914 was only seven years from being a territory. Though segregated, it had no history of slavery, and most of its blacks were escaped slaves or freedmen—or their descendants—who had moved there by choice. This made for an unusual social atmosphere, different from the Old South, but not Northern either. "Having arrived at the same time that most of the whites had," Ellison once explained to an interviewer,

> [my parents] felt that the restriction of Negro freedom was imposed unjustly through the force of numbers and that they had the right and obligation to fight against it. . . . I recognized limitations, yes; but I thought these limitations were unjust and I felt no sense of inferiority which would keep me from getting those things I desired out of life.

One of the things he desired was to become a classical composer, and in 1933 he hoboed his way from Oklahoma City to Alabama, where he attended Tuskegee Institute, the college whose philosophy, along with that of its founder, Booker T. Washington, is so mercilessly savaged in the opening chapters of *Invisible Man*. Like the hero of the novel (though for nothing like the same reasons), Ellison left Tuskegee for New York in the summer of 1936, planning to earn money to pay for his senior year. He never returned—because it was the Depression and money was hard to come by, and because he met Langston Hughes, who introduced him to the novels of Malraux, and Richard Wright, who encouraged him to become a writer.

The first words of *Invisible Man*, the words of a man living in a Harlem coal cellar, were written, in circumstances appropriate to the pluralist imagination of their author, in a farmhouse in Vermont. The book appeared in 1952; it was a best seller for 13 weeks, and in 1953 it won a National Book Award. The novel is a catalog of every irony implicit in "emancipation." Every style of response to the consequences of that moment in American history, every stereotype that haunts its failure, every doomed quest to recover its promise or revenge its betrayal, seems to be recorded in Ellison's book. It is in this respect peculiar that some readers have, over the years, complained that *Invisible Man* is not, or not sufficiently, a protest novel. For the book so clearly is a protest, and a protest as much against what white Americans have lost by our racism as what black Americans have suffered.

But the complaint is in another respect not so odd, for *Invisible Man*, with its archetypal hero, its elaborately patterned imagery, its symbols and puns and allusions, is the most literary of books, and literariness is always taken for an enemy of true engagement. "What astonishes one most about *Invisible Man*," wrote Irving Howe in 1963, in a controversial essay that opposes Ellison and James

## THE STONE CALENDAR

The personnel of January are standing
stones with two traditional faces.

Faces that are the lard and cinders
of February. I was watching them there

where the moon of March lit them
and behold they said they were cold

yet not so cold in April as
previously. Further, there were pleasant

side-effects such as the expected May flowers
which put some slight blush there on them

which fulminated, inasmuch as it became
June. So they mopped their brows

in July too. Pah! in August with
quadrants of leafy faces. Only

in September they with tempered
relief rest in tawny shade, with

dolor too for the October nasty
winds and November more follow.

So there they ever are almost back where they
began in December looking at the chilly prospect.

CAROLINE KNOX



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Baldwin to Richard Wright, "is the apparent freedom it displays from the ideological and emotional penalties suffered by Negroes in this country. I say 'apparent' because the freedom is not quite so complete as the book's admirers like to suppose." Howe was clearly talking less about the novel than about the novelist: he was accusing Ellison, much as Ellison had once accused Wright, of being untrue to his own experience.

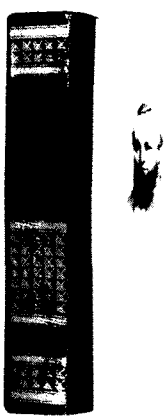
Ellison's reply, reprinted a year later in *Shadow and Act* as "The World and the Jug," is one of his fiercest pieces—and well it might be, for he was being called upon to defend the very essence of his notion of art, a notion that, because validated at every point by personal history, was inextricably bound up with his notion of himself. "My goal was not to escape, or hold back," he told Howe,

> but to work through; to transcend, as the blues transcend the painful condition with which they deal. The protest is there, not because I was helpless before my social condition, but because I *put* it there. If there is anything "miraculous" about the book it is the result of hard work undertaken in the belief that the work of art is important in itself, that it is a social action in itself.

At the root of Ellison's defense is an Arnoldian idea about the role of literature in the modern democracy: literature is the stable currency of community in a society otherwise given over to competition and change. "In Macon County, Alabama, I read Marx, Freud, T. S. Eliot, Pound, Gertrude Stein and Hemingway," Ellison wrote in "The World and the Jug." "Books which seldom, if ever, mentioned Negroes were to release me from whatever 'segregated' idea I might have had of my human possibilities. . . . I understand a bit more about myself as Negro because literature has taught me something of my identity as Western man." And the essays collected in *Going to the Territory* reconfirm this article of faith again and again. "Now I realize how fortunate I am to have held on to literature as a medium for transcending the divisions of our society," he writes in the title essay on Inman Page. Elsewhere he speaks of literary archetypes as "embodiments of abiding patterns of human existence which underlie racial, cultural, and religious differences. They are, in their basic humanity, timeless and raceless." And in a piece called "The Novel as a Function of American Democracy": "As a form, the novel permits a writer to survive the consequences of encountering the chaos he must reckon with when he attempts to deal with the basic truths of human existence."

The appeal is attractive because it is an appeal to the experience of everyone who has ever found in a work of literature or music or art a part of himself, thus discovering, in a sort of micro-anthropological breakthrough, a link between his own self and the rest of human history. If we resist the full implications of Ellison's appeal, it is partly because we may feel that at some point our identification with an abstract human condition begins to pull us away from the particularity of a current predicament. But it is also partly because our experience of American democracy suggests that although art can indeed be one of the things that tie people together, it is sometimes one of the things that keep them apart. This is the underside of the Arnoldian program: the cultivation of cultural


LibertyPress
LibertyClassics



SELECTED WRITINGS OF LORD ACTON
VOLUME II
*ESSAYS IN THE STUDY AND WRITINGS OF HISTORY*

By John Emerich Edward Dalberg-Acton
Edited by J. Rufus Fears

Lord Acton's concept of Liberty was the theme of the essays collected in the first volume of this edition, *Essays in the History of Liberty*. In this volume may be found the historical studies upon which Acton drew to explicate his understanding of the idea of liberty.

Writing on such diverse topics as the divorce of Henry VIII, Leopold von Ranke, and the History of the Papacy, Acton argued his position that history demonstrated progress and unity through the story of liberty.

Included here are Acton's most important historical essays from his days as a scholarly journalist and his famous Inaugural Lecture at Cambridge in 1895, "The Study of History."

These two volumes, edited by Professor J. Rufus Fears of Indiana University, will be followed by a concluding volume entitled *Essays in Religion, Politics, and Morality*.

*Hardcover $15.00* *ISBN 0-86597-048-3*
*Paperback $ 7.50* *ISBN 0-86597-049-1*

Prepayment is required on all orders not for resale. We pay book rate postage on prepaid orders. Please allow 4 to 6 weeks for delivery.
*All* orders from outside the United States *must* be prepaid in *U.S. dollars*. To order, or for a copy of our catalogue, write:
LibertyPress/LibertyClassics
7440 North Shadeland, Dept. T120A
Indianapolis, IN 46250




LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

taste is a route into the mainstream, but it is also one of the most insidious and effective ways of locking some people out.

*Going to the Territory* continues the work Ellison began with *Shadow and Act*: the articulation of an enormously valuable view of American culture. If there is any indication that events since 1964 have led him to compromise his picture of American life, I cannot detect it. As in the earlier volume, most of the pieces are the products of a variety of occasions; but the longest—an essay called "An Extravagance of Laughter," about a performance Ellison saw of *Tobacco Road* soon after he arrived in New York City, and about the uncontrollable laughing fit he humiliated himself by succumbing to during the show—was written specially for this book, and it is one of the most remarkable things Ellison has done. It takes up nearly every theme in his work, but at its heart is a meditation on the relations between the Southern black man and the lynch mob that goes as far as anything in words can go to make sense of an insanity.

Ellison's style, in some of his more theoretical essays, sometimes ascends a little too close to the rhetorical ceiling. But in the mode of "An Extravagance of Laughter"—a sort of critical-autobiographical-allegorical mode that is distinctively Ellison's—the metaphors can, by their almost reckless inflation, achieve a considerable power:

> A Southern bus was a contraption contrived by laying the South's social pyramid on its side, knocking out a few strategic holes, and rendering it vehicular through the addition of engine, windows, and wheels. Thus converted, with the sharp apex of the pyramid blunted and equipped with fare box and steering gear, and its sprawling base curtailed severely and narrowly aligned (and arrayed with jim crow signs), a ride in such a vehicle became, at least for Negroes, as unpredictable as a trip in a spaceship doomed to be caught in the time warp of history—that man-made "fourth dimension" which ever confounds our American grasp of "real," of *actual*, time or duration.
>
> For blacks and whites alike, Southern buses were places of hallucination, but especially for Negroes. Because once inside, their journey ended even before the engine fired and the wheels got rolling. Then, as with a "painted ship upon a painted ocean," the engine chugged, the tires scuffed, and the scenery outside flashed and flickered, but they themselves remained, like Zeno's arrow, ever in the same old place.

There is something surreal about the description. Its images are images of the exotic and the fantastic, and they collapse into one another as in the sequences of a dream: the bus is a pyramid, a space capsule, the Ancient Mariner's ship, the philosopher's arrow. But the power derives from an anger about an injustice, and our sense of the reality of both.

Rumors about the second novel have drifted about for many years. Part of the manuscript was destroyed when Ellison's summer house burned down in the late 1960s; a few brief selections have appeared in print. Its publication will be an event, of course, but in one respect at least it will not be a surprise. We can be certain that Ellison will not have changed his mind.

**LOUIS MENAND**

Louis Menand teaches in the English department at Princeton.

# A FEAST OF WORDS

## The Circle of Reason by Amitav Ghosh

(Viking, 423 pp., $17.95)

*The Circle of Reason* is a huge, ambitious novel with a crowd of characters and themes, set in a number of countries: India, Yemen, Egypt, and Algeria. It is like an immense pot into which scores of more or less random ingredients have been thrown. Some of those ingredients are those that make good books. There is the conflict between reason and superstition, mind and feeling, criminality and the law, the collective and the individual. But although Ghosh's pot swills with life and parts of the stew are delicious, it is not cooked all the way through. Parts of it are indigestible, in fact; and they take so long in the chewing that the jaws of your brain will ache with the effort.

In its form the book recalls *The Tin Drum* or, more closely and slightly suspiciously, *Midnight's Children*. The style is multidimensional, ironic, a mixture of the bizarre and the ordinary. It seethes with stories, odd characters, terrible journeys, strange occurrences. Ghosh takes it for granted, as Salman Rushdie said in a recent interview, "that reality is not realistic," and that "magical realism" through its torrent of entertaining lies comes closer to telling us how the world is than something that attempts to reproduce the surface of everyday life.

When the boy, Alu, loses his father and mother in a car crash, he goes to stay with his uncle Balaram. Balaram, after making a fatuous remark to his heroes, Irène Joliot-Curie and her husband, Frédéric Joliot, runs away in embarrassment and absentmindedly buys a book called *Practical Phrenology*. He then becomes obsessed with heads—with measuring them, feeling them, and divining the future according to their contours. Fortunately for Balaram, Alu's head is shaped like a potato, "bulging all over with knobs and bumps." Balaram examines it regularly, until something about the head tells him that the boy should be apprenticed to a disappointed weaver, Shombhu Debrath. And Alu, constantly covered with hideous pus-filled boils, becomes a superb weaver, a genius weaver.

Balaram's other obsession is with carbolic acid—with cleanliness, science, and the killing of germs. And Balaram's other hero is Pasteur, who didn't allow misguided and superstitious people to stop him from building his laboratory at Villeneuve l'Etang. Thus Balaram douses the village and his enemies with carbolic acid. Then he opens a school that will have two departments: one will teach Pure Reason and the other Practical Reason.

Meanwhile Balaram's enemy and former employer, Bhudeb Roy, once splattered with carbolic acid during a political meeting, has put the policeman Jyoti onto him. But Jyoti is in the wrong profession. He is not a good policemen, despite an enthusiastic attempt at torture. Jyoti would be better as a bird. And indeed, "a well-known illustrator had been impressed by his watercolour of a queen bee-eater."



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

When the school is blown up by Bhudeb Roy and everyone but Alu is conveniently killed, Alu escapes to al-Ghazira in a boat on which he meets Professor Samuel and Zindi, an ex-whore who now has businesses in al-Ghazira, the land of "gold watches and silver calculators, jewelled belts and silk shirts." Zindi, copulating on the boat with the rather too mysterious Alu, decides to find him a job in al-Ghazira. The job is on a construction site. Unfortunately the building falls on him and he is trapped. No one can see how to get him out. But the next thing we know—and this is totally unexplained—he is free.

BUT BEING trapped is enough to give him a vision. And he makes a wild speech, "a khichri of words: couscous, rice, dal and onions, all stirred together, stamped and boiled, Arabic with Hindi, Hindi swallowing Bengali, English doing a dance." Out of this meal of words Alu explains the necessity of there being an unoppressive, communalistic, cooperative society, free of germs, rationally organized, and purged of the worst germ of all, Money. Alu would rather be the Pasteur of political society; like his surrogate father Balaram, he would cleanse the world of impurities. The vision takes hold, and everyone in the neighborhood starts to cooperate. Pimps and exploiters are driven out. Everything is distributed according to need; money is abolished. People come from miles to join in. Zindi, much loved and relied upon, falls into despair upon discovering that capitalists, however benign, are not as invaluable as they think they are. Alu's people are beginning to do things for themselves, which is always dangerous.

So Zindi betrays her friend and ex-lover, Alu, to the birdman and police vulture, Jyoti, who follows them across the Middle East, only to find that while in pursuit of these dangerous subversives his boss has installed a relative in his job. But the chase continues.

In addition to this central, rather convoluted story, there are numerous others, often askew in relation to the rest of the book. And there are numerous other characters, including Nury the egg salesman, who knows everything about everyone in al-Ghazira. His eyes are at such odd angles "it was said of him that when other people only saw Cairo he could see Bombay as well." He has his head bitten off by a camel.

Ghosh's writing is certainly more lively than a good deal of contemporary fiction, at least in Britain. India seems full of stories of a kind that England, for instance, isn't. Perhaps there is now a sort of uniformity in British life that doesn't allow for the strangeness and sheer variety of the tales told about India and the Third World. Or perhaps everything British has already been so exhaustively documented. Or again, perhaps the imagination of British novelists has become more cramped, dry, and insular as our small island becomes shabbier, more intolerant and illiberal, as it slowly shrinks into itself.

But Rushdie lives in Britain, and one of his virtues—in this he is an example to British novelists—is his brilliant, creative thieving, his eclecticism. He has taken from India, from England, from both German and South American literature, using these influences to forge a new style, a unique voice. And what he is able to do, in a way that Amitav Ghosh cannot, is to unite the personal and the political. Rushdie's characters, however bizarre or idiosyncratic, always live in a real world of political pressures. We are able to see, in his work, the many complicated ways in which public politics determines private behavior.

Ghosh's novel, in contrast, is set in a kind of timeless no-man's-land of the imagination. His characters have a set of eccentric traits that he has pinned onto them. They have no depth; it is almost impossible to care about them. Some of the prose is terrific, vivid, and original; some of the descriptions are marvelous. But the book is overextended and broken-backed, lacking in all narrative drive and tension. Ghosh's numerous and overwhelming details don't add up, and ideas once introduced are inexplicably and irritatingly dropped. The book is fascinating, but it is a first draft rather than a complete and successful object.

HANIF KUREISHI

Hanif Kureishi is the author of the screenplay for *My Beautiful Laundrette*.

# SAVAGE STEREOTYPES

## War Without Mercy: Race & Power in the Pacific War by John W. Dower

(Pantheon, 399 pp., $22.50)

Wars breed hatred, and even normally sophisticated people indulge in ugly depictions of the enemy. In order to win, it is imperative to kill and destroy, and soldier and civilian alike must be taught to hate the Other. The Pacific War, fought between Japan on one side and the United States and its allies on the other, was no exception. But because it involved a conflict between countries of different races, wartime pronouncements and publications produced some of the ugliest instances of name-calling. Americans referred to Japanese as apes and "monkey-men," to be shot like ducks and quail. The Japanese called their white enemies demons and beasts, to be conquered for the salvation of Asia (whose people, however, the Japanese also looked down upon).

Were these primarily cases of wartime excesses, propaganda rhetoric designed to inculcate a fighting spirit and to be discarded as soon as the war ended? Or did wartime racist images reveal something deeper, more durable and disturbing? John Dower, a respected historian of modern Japan, provides massive evidence to support the latter interpretation. His new book is the most detailed study of the Pacific War as a race war. It argues not only that the war pit nations of different races against one another, but also that it brought to the surface the ethnocentric, racist legacies of the countries involved, particularly the United States and Japan.

Of these two, much more is known about racism in America. Even so, it comes as a shock to learn that stereotypical views of the Japanese appear to have permeated all mass media (including films) as well as all groups of people—intellectuals in addition to ordinary citizens. Dower marshals evidence to show that even those who decried crude racism saw Japanese national characteristics in a simplistic fashion: the Japanese,



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

many believed, were like children who had not learned to think for themselves; they had no individuality and were conditioned by "compulsive conformity." Wartime propaganda similarly stressed the themes of primitivism and infantilism, which allegedly accounted for Japanese savagery, imitativeness, treacherousness, and the like.

Images of childishness might well not have aroused any fear had they been held in isolation. But Dower argues that the stereotypes were products of a cultural legacy that presupposed a hierarchical view of mankind according to which colored races were distinctively inferior to whites. Now that Japan had challenged that supremacy, the old fears—Henry Adams had declared half a century earlier that "the dark races are gaining on us"—surfaced once again, prompting premonitions of a new yellow peril. For many Americans, the war with Japan was a war to preserve white supremacy.

Much less is known about Japanese racism, and one of Dower's signal achievements is to document it. He is quite ruthless in exposing the racism of Japanese officials and intellectuals, including those who are revered today for their "liberalism." The Japanese, he admits, did not engage, except on occasion, in the kind of extreme racist rhetoric and strategy that characterized Germany. Moreover, in comparison with wartime American pronouncements, he writes, Japanese ethnocentrism was more "sophisticated." But the fact remains, as the book amply demonstrates, that the Japanese discriminated against other Asians whose lands they plundered, frowned upon interracial marriages, and repeatedly asserted their superior position in their own hierarchical view of the world. Where Americans called Japanese infants and children, Japanese ridiculed Americans as old and decrepit. While denouncing American discrimination against Asians, Japanese were busy trying to assert their differences from other Asians, in fact to "Caucasianize" themselves. They believed, nonetheless, that the "purity of the Yamato race" would remain and enable the nation to defeat the materialistic West.

As Dower shows, there were many parallels in wartime American and Japanese "supremacism." The racism of both was based on a conception of an ascending order of races. This convergence, ironically, may have served to prolong the agony of war, for it can be shown that the extremist images the two sides held of each other became most blatant during the final year of the war, when casualties and destructiveness also reached unprecedented heights. Dower suggests a violent dynamic at work: the more the Other was depicted as bestial, stripped of ordinary feelings, the greater became the need to destroy him once and for all.

And yet the very fact that Japanese and Americans were similarly ethnocentric, racist, and supremacist—in other words, that they shared many ideas—may have been instrumental in effecting an amazingly rapid postwar reconciliation. This, of course, would be no consolation to the millions of Asians who perished during the war and continue to suffer from its aftereffects. Moreover, Dower feels the persistence of wartime attitudes creates serious problems in relations between the United States and Japan. The trade friction between the two countries, he shows, has produced some belligerent rhetoric on both sides reminiscent of the war years.

ESSENTIALLY the same stereotypes that underlay wartime propaganda have re-emerged in that rhetoric, which suggests the limited range of vocabulary and imagery available when international tensions spill over into popular consciousness. The key to overcoming the instinct to simplify, as Dower suggests throughout his book, is to recognize diversity within each country, as well as commonality among nations. Wartime racism assumed monolithic national characteristics. The Japanese conception of racial purity was derived from a sense of uniqueness: Japan was enshrined as a country with a distinctive history and a set of special qualities such as harmony, spiritual unity, and self-sacrifice. These same qualities were recognized by Americans, except that they saw them as manifestations of a Japanese lack of individuality.

Likewise, Americans (and their European allies) stressed the uniqueness of their own civilization, underestimating internal diversity and inconsistencies. Their emphasis on the themes of freedom and individualism provided ammunition for the Japanese, who denounced the West's race prejudice, materialism, and imperialism. But if nothing else, the war showed that there were barbaric Japanese and humane Japanese, just as there were cruel Americans and kindly Americans. Dower does not discuss the numerous Americans during the war who went out of their way to help Japanese, or the attitudes of children in the two countries who may not have shared all of the prejudices of the older generation. In any event, his book, which may well be the most important study of the Pacific War ever published, is an ideal place to begin the project of learning to avoid hysterical excesses in viewing foreign affairs.

AKIRA IRIYE

Akira Iriye, who teaches history at the University of Chicago and the International University of Japan, is the author of *Power and Culture: The Japanese-American War* (Harvard University Press).

**GOVERNMENT JOBS**
$16,040-$59,230/yr.
Now Hiring.
**Call 805-687-6000 Ext. R-7838**
for current federal list.

## CORRESPONDENCE, *from page 6*

life, surely one of them should prove useful; confidentially, I have recommended he consider "plastics." Mr. Barnes, my wife and I had also thought Michael would make a fine Christian pastor—right up to the day of his Bar Mitzvah. In spite of his present concern, I have every confidence that Michael will be successful in whatever career he chooses.

HOWARD R. SLOAN, M.D., Ph.D.
(Michael's Dad)
*Professor of Pediatrics*
*The Ohio State University*
*College of Medicine*
*Columbus, Ohio*

*To the editors:*

I have been enjoying my role as the archetypal recent college graduate far too much to make any personal revelations here; and I doubt I'll have the time to keep you informed as things develop (unless, of course, you would like to put me on a retainer!).

I do, however, promise to accomplish enough in my life so that, on looking back, your ruminations on my fate will not be the thrill of a lifetime. Thanks for the advice.

MICHAEL C. SLOAN
*Bloomington, Indiana*



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# WASHINGTON DIARIST

## *Don't Drink the Water*

FOR ABSURDIST DRAMA, you can't top the daily transcripts of Larry Speakes's White House press briefings. On July 9 an alarm went off indicating that the chlorine level in the White House water supply was dangerously low. Here's how the session began:

MR. SPEAKES: Don't drink that.

Q: What's that?

MR. ROUSSEL: You don't want it?

Q: I said I'm not going to—

MR. SPEAKES: Hadn't you seen the signs?

Q: No.

MR. ROUSSEL: Might get a new story today.

MR. SPEAKES: What? Is it coffee made with water?

Q: Larry, if he has other things to say—(laughter)

Q: Oh.

MR. SPEAKES: Wait a minute.

Q: Yes, I had better ask Gene what he made this with.

MR. SPEAKES: You didn't see the signs?

Q: Yes, what are they?

MR. SPEAKES: The President of the Association (laughter)—help, get help quick!

To the untrained ear, this passage is inexplicable. But read this next excerpt bearing in mind Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. Characters Mr. Speakes and "Q" inhabit a barren post-apocalyptic landscape. The only prop on the stage is a Mister Coffee, but due to radioactive contamination, the water is unsafe to drink. Both characters are consumed by ennui. To pass time, Mr. Speakes attempts to tell jokes and Q harasses him with irrelevant questions. They wait for "Gene," who is supposed to deliver them from their predicament. He never arrives.

MR. SPEAKES: It's—what is that stuff that the commies put in the water?

Q: Fluoride.

MR. SPEAKES: Yes. (Laughter).

Q: I trust Gene.

A sequel is in the works. Call it "Speakes's Last Tape."

SENATOR ALPHONSE D'AMATO works New York City's ethnic neighborhoods brilliantly. He can dance the hora and scarf down kielbasa with the best of them. But D'Amato took a break from baby kissing last week to engage in an undercover publicity operation in Washington Heights. As the newspapers told it, the Fonz drove up to a house at 555 West 160th Street and signaled to three drug dealers by putting a thumb to his nose and lifting two fingers, which meant that he wanted two vials of crack. He paid $20. D'Amato tried to pass off this stunt as an effort to show how easy it is to buy drugs in Manhattan. But that was hardly in doubt. What, then, was the purpose of D'Amato's field trip? Perhaps it was a campaign stop after all. Drug dealers are the only wealthy voting bloc not yet in his back pocket, which may explain why he politely thanked the man who sold him the drugs instead of slapping the cuffs on him.

CRACK HAS BEEN A HOT TOPIC in Washington too, since Courtland Milloy wrote a shocking front-page story in the *Washington Post* about an addict named Amir Chela Vik-Kiv. Milloy told in graphic detail how Vik-Kiv, a once-successful TV cameraman, would propel himself into bliss with a hit on his glass pipe, and would become so desperate when his drugs were used up that he would smoke roach eggs and crumbs off his kitchen floor. "What I need is serious help," he told Milloy. At first I wondered why he allowed a reporter to use his name and portray him in such an unflattering light. Then it all became clear. Within a few days, Nancy Reagan had offered to pay for Vik-Kiv's treatment at a reasonable $28-a-day rehabilitation center. Mayor Marion Barry called soon after from his limousine and offered a stay at a $600-a-day private psychiatric clinic, and offered to pay all of Vik-Kiv's back bills, including his rent while he was in the hospital. Barry also told him that the taxpayers might build an elevator in the house where his handicapped son lives. Of all the thousands of drug addicts in D.C., he had to steal Nancy's. He even used the occasion to demand more federal money for drug treatment. Nancy ought to remind the public how Barry spent part of his last installment, awarding fat contracts to cronies who were supposed to train students as drug counselors, even though they had no experience in the field. One got $675,000. If I were Vik-Kiv, I wouldn't sign anything until the mayor threw in a new Volvo.

I RARELY AGREE with Senator Jesse Helms on issues related to sexual ethics, but he's right about a gay rights bill the D.C. City Council recently passed. The ordinance prohibits insurance companies from putting a surcharge on the policies of customers who test positive for the AIDS virus. Under the law, insurance companies aren't even allowed to require a test to determine whether someone has contracted AIDS. This may drive a number of insurers out of the District. Even Ralph Nader's National Insurance Consumer Organization agrees with Helms that the D.C. AIDS bills is unfair to insurance consumers. But Helms and co-sponsor William Dannmeyer couldn't stick to the merits of the issue at a recent press conference they held with the Moral Majority to defend their resolution. Everyone referred to AIDS victims as a "special interest group," and a few of the ministers present argued that D.C. law would bring more gays to Washington and threaten tourists with "concentrated exposure." One Reverend Fuller suggested that you can contract AIDS from drinking fountains. This hysterical homophobia is hardly called for. Let's hope Helms & Co. don't get worried enough to invoke an older and even more absurd D.C. law—which makes sodomy a crime.

I HAVEN'T MADE A WILL, but if I die suddenly, here are my two requests: First, if Jesse Jackson crashes my funeral, as he did Len Bias's, don't let him speak. And second, I ask that the obit writers treat me more kindly than they did Rudy Vallee. The *Washington Post* described the legendary crooner as "a womanizer, a brawler, and something of a tightwad." The *New York Times* tartly observed that he was not a modest man, and "possessed few musical qualities." The obit continued: "Mr. Vallee earned a great deal of money, and parted with as little of it as possible. He kept his tips extremely modest, avoided expensive clothes, rarely spent more than a nickel for cigars and often ate in the Automat or other inexpensive restaurants." He died watching Liberty Weekend on TV—a final, noble protest against this age of wretched excess.

**J.W.**



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# THE COLOR OF LIFE

KODACOLOR AND VR-G ARE TRADEMARKS © EASTMAN KODAK COMPANY, 1986.

ANNOUNCING THE MOST ACCURATE, REALISTIC COLOR IN PRINT FILM.

Kodacolor VR-G 100 FILM

NEW KODACOLOR VR-G FILM
**THE COLOR OF LIFE**

Kodak

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED